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Homilies

FOR

HOLY DAYS AND SEASONS

COMMEMORATIVE OF

OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,

FROM ADVENT TO WHITSUNTIDE

INCLUSIVE,

Translated from the Writings of the Saints.

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES OF THE WRITERS.

Sanctis Tuis maxima erat Lux.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES.

S. AMBROSE,

BISHOP AND CONFESSOR, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH.

A.D. 397.

S. AMBROSE's father, also named Ambrose, was prefect of the prætorium in Gaul, an office of the highest dignity and importance. He had three children,—Marcellina, who received the religious veil from Pope Liberius, Satyrus, and our Saint. S. Ambrose was born about the year 340; but whether at Arles, Lyons, or Triers, is not certain. His father died whilst he was yet an infant; upon which his mother returned with her children to Rome. She was a devout woman, who took great care of the education of her children.

The Saint became a good poet and orator, and pleaded causes in the prætor's court at Milan, whither he resorted with his brother Satyrus in the pursuit of his profession. His success was such, that Probus the prefect made him his assessor, and afterwards governor of Liguria and Æmilia, that is, of all that country which now comprehends the rich dioceses of Milan, Turin, Genoa, Ravenna, and Bologna. Probus said to him at parting, "Go, and govern more like a bishop than a judge." Upon the death of Auxentius, the Arian Bishop of Milan, there were great commotions about the choice of his successor; and, to prevent open violence, S. Ambrose thought it his duty to go into the church to appease the people. There, while he was speaking, a child cried out the words, "Ambrose Bishop." This the whole assembly instantly took up, and both Catholics and Arians unanimously proclaimed him Bishop of Milan. After repeated remonstrances on his part, in the course of which he alleged it as contrary to the canons, that a catechumen, not yet baptised, should be elected bishop,—he found himself obliged to accept the office, and was first baptised, and then received the episcopal consecration on the 7th of December 374, in the thirty-fourth year of his age.

He immediately gave all his property to the Church, reserving only a small income for his sister Marcellina; and he committed the charge of his temporalities to his brother Satyrus. Soon after his ordination,

he sent to Valentinian complaints of the conduct of some of his officers, which the Emperor received with great reverence, begging the Saint to "continue to apply to his sins the remedies prescribed by the Divine law." He employed himself diligently in study, but neglected not at the same time the care of his people. He purged the diocese of Milan almost entirely of the Arian heresy. He never dined except on Sundays and great Festivals, and also on Saturdays, it being a custom peculiar to the Church of Milan never to fast on Saturdays. But when the Saint was at Rome, he conformed to the usual practice. He preached every Sunday; and S. Austin, before he was baptised, was constantly present at his sermons; not, however, out of piety, but out of curiosity, and for the pleasure of hearing his eloquence. He often enlarged in his discourses on the praises of the Virgin state, and took many societies of holy Virgins under his special direction. In his book entitled *The Institution of a Virgin*, he enters upon a confutation of Bonosus, who renewed the error of Helvidius, denying the perpetual Virginity of the holy Mother of God.

During the ravages committed by the Goths under the Emperor Gratian, S. Ambrose employed, in redeeming the captives, not only all the money he could raise, but even the gold vessels belonging to the Church; taking first those not yet consecrated, and reserving the others for a more pressing necessity. Upon being reproached with this conduct, he replied, that it was more expedient to save the souls of men than gold; for, not only the lives of the captives and the honour of the women were preserved, but the children were rescued from being educated in idolatry. "I find," said he, "that the Blood of Jesus Christ poured out in the gold plate, hath not only shone therein, but hath also impressed upon it the virtue of redemption."

In 379 S. Ambrose lost his brother Satyrus. He was wrecked on the isle of Sardinia, and refused baptism from an heretic bishop of that island, but received that Sacrament in the first Catholic country he reached; shortly after which he returned to Milan, and died in the arms of S. Ambrose and S. Marcellina their sister. S. Satyrus is commemorated on the 17th of September.

In 381 S. Ambrose held a council in Milan against the heresy of Apollinaris; and the year following assisted at a council held by Pope Damasus at Rome, concerning the divisions of the Eastern Church. During this visit, he is said to have healed a woman of the palsy by his prayers.

He had much influence with the Emperor Gratian, who was a good man and a zealous Catholic; and who, being assassinated in the year 383, lamented with his last breath the absence of his father

Ambrose. Upon the approach of the rebel general Maximus, by whom Gratian had been murdered, towards Rome, S. Ambrose went to meet him, and induced him to stop his march, and at length concluded a treaty with him. He successfully opposed the restoration of idolatrous worship at Rome under the Emperor Valentinian II. In spite of the great obligations he had conferred on the Emperor and his mother the Empress Justina, who was an Arian, she continued to persecute him for his stedfast adherence to the Catholic faith. About Easter, in 385, she demanded of him the Portian basilic at Milan for the use of the Arians; and, upon the Saint's refusal, required either that or the new basilic; but the Bishop was inflexible. The Emperor claiming the basilic as his right, S. Ambrose replied, that he would refuse him nothing, not even his life; but God's own House he could not give up to him. He continued all day in the old basilic, but at night went home to his house, in order that they might seize him, if they wished it. The next morning, being Wednesday, he went again to the old basilic, which was surrounded by soldiers, and a troop was despatched at the same time to seize the new church; but S. Ambrose sent some priests there to officiate, who threatened the soldiers with excommunication; whereupon, being Catholics, they knelt down fervently with the congregation and prayed. That night the Saint could not return to his house, the church being surrounded by soldiers; and accordingly passed the night chanting psalms with his brethren. The next day, which was Maundy Thursday, he continued praying and preaching to the people until news was brought that the Emperor had withdrawn the troops. Whereupon all joined in joy and thanksgiving.

Before the next Easter, the Empress had obtained a law in favour of the Arians, by virtue of which she again demanded of the Saint the Portian basilic; and upon his repeated refusal, the Emperor insisted on his appointing judges, after the example of Auxentius, the Arian claimant to the see of Milan, before whom and the Emperor himself the cause between them might be tried. This the Saint peremptorily refused, saying that it was the part of Bishops to judge Emperors, not to have the faith judged by laymen. He then retired into the church, where he was surrounded and guarded by the people. The church was soon encompassed with troops, who allowed any one to go in, but none to go out. The Saint being thus shut up with the people, preached often to them. One of these sermons, preached on Palm Sunday, is extant under the title, *On delivering up the Basilics*. One Euthymius kept a chariot in a house near the church to be ready to carry the Saint off into banishment. A year after, he was put into

the same chariot, and carried into banishment himself, and from that very house; under which misfortune the Saint furnished him with the necessary supplies. At this time an assassin came into the Saint's chamber to murder him; but as he lifted up his hand with the naked sword, his arm remained extended in the air, till he confessed that Justina had sent him upon that errand. On his repentance, however, he received the use of his arm. After remaining several days in the church, the guards were removed as before, and the Saint returned to his house.

S. Ambrose taught the people to sing hymns, and introduced the custom of chanting the psalms in alternate choirs. During the heat of this persecution, God gave a visible consolation to His holy servant and his afflicted flock, in the discovery of the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. For the consecration of a new church, now called the Ambrosian basilic, he searched near the sepulchres of SS. Nabor and Felix, and discovered the bones of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. During the translation of these into the new church, a blind man, named Severus, was cured by touching the bier with a handkerchief, which he applied to his eyes. This miracle is attested by all the writers of that period, and was so notorious as to cut off all possibility of denying the fact. S. Austin and Paulinus say that an end was put to the persecution by these events, in the year 386.¹

The following year Maximus marched upon Italy; and S. Ambrose, forgetful of all the injurious treatment he had sustained from the Empress and her son, again consented to go and meet him; but the

¹ The subject of Ecclesiastical (as distinguished from Scriptural) Miracles in general, and of those to which the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protasius were instrumental, in particular, has been very briefly and quite popularly treated by a living divine (*Church of the Fathers*, chap. iii.).* Modern times have given birth, on this as on other subjects, to many rationalistic and semi-infidel theories, which have sometimes been most incautiously countenanced even by sincere believers in Christianity. It should be unnecessary to observe, among professing members of the Church, who acknowledge the visible Kingdom of Christ as the field of an abiding supernatural Agency (whether or not always palpable), that what are commonly called miracles are *possible* at all times, and that man is no competent judge of the *reasons* which call for them. Thus, the whole question resolves itself into one of the evidence in each alleged case; and reverent minds, accustomed not only to yield their assent to the general opinion of the Church, but to connect the idea of *power* in some especial manner with that of holiness, will be apt to consider, that, so far from there being a presumption *against* the miracles which are recorded of the Saints, of whatever age, on *à priori* grounds, there is a strong presumption (to say the least), antecedent to the particular evidence, *in favour* of such supernatural occurrences, when they come recommended to our belief by the judgment of the great body of Christendom.

* A more elaborate treatise on the miracles of this period is promised in a forthcoming Translation of Fleury's Ecclesiastical History.

tyrant would not agree to any terms, and the Saint returned to Milan, warning the Emperor that he had to deal with a false and perfidious enemy. The event proved the Saint's sagacity; for Maximus took possession of the passes of the Alps by treachery, and would have been master of Italy, had not the Great Theodosius hastened to the relief of Valentinian, and in a short time completely defeated the tyrant, who was put to death in the year 388. Theodosius, a zealous Catholic, so impressed upon the mind of Valentinian that his reverses were a judgment upon him for espousing the Arian cause, and persecuting the Church, that he became afterwards a zealous Catholic for the rest of his life; and put himself entirely under the direction of S. Ambrose.

In the year 390, Theodosius was instigated to order a most cruel massacre, at Thessalonica, of several thousand innocent people; for which sin S. Ambrose forbade him the church during many months; and only absolved him on his doing public penance with the rest of the penitents, and on his enacting a law allowing in future a reprieve of thirty days after passing sentence of death, with the view of giving time for calm consideration of the case. Even after his absolution, the Emperor never ceased to bewail this unjust massacre to the day of his death. He also conformed with great humility to the admonitions of the Saint, by keeping himself at church amongst the laity, and not intruding himself, because he was Emperor, among the clergy, in the chancel within the rails; a custom which he established in the East also, where a contrary habit had prevailed.

After the return of Theodosius to the East, Justina being now dead, and Valentinian firmly established on the throne, the young Emperor guided himself entirely by the counsels of S. Ambrose; and was desirous of receiving baptism at his hands, for which purpose the Saint undertook a journey into Gaul. But he was arrested in his journey by the news of the murder of the Emperor by his rebel general Arbogastes. Upon the usurpation of the imperial purple by Eugenius, which ensued, Theodosius once more came into the West, and was again, by a special miracle, completely victorious over the rebels. But shortly after, according to a prediction of S. John of Egypt, he died in the arms of S. Ambrose, to whose care he left his two sons. This was on the 7th of January, 395, in the fiftieth year of his age.

This year S. Ambrose discovered the bodies of the holy martyrs Nazarius and Celsus, and translated them into the basilic of the Apostles, near the Roman Gate. He died two years after this event, which was signalled by many miracles. One of the last actions per-

formed by the Saint was the ordination of S. Honoratus, Bishop of Vercelli. A few days before he fell sick, he foretold his death; but said he should live till Easter. Before he took to his bed, he continued his usual studies, and expounded the forty-fourth Psalm.¹ Whilst he dictated this exposition, Paulinus, who was his amanuensis, looking up, saw a flame covering his head, and gradually creeping into his mouth, which so terrified him, that he could not write after the Saint's dictation till the vision was over. This exposition is extant, and ends at the 25th verse, nothing being said upon the two last verses. Upon hearing of his sickness, Count Stilico, the guardian and minister of the Emperor Honorius, said publicly—"The day that this great man dies, destruction hangs over Italy;" and, sending for the magistrates and chief men of the city, he desired them to go to the Saint and beg of him to pray to God to prolong his life for the sake of others. They went, and standing about his bed, entreated him with tears to do so. The Saint replied, "I have not so lived among you as to be ashamed to live longer; nor am I afraid to die, for we have a good God." A few days after, about midnight before Holy Saturday, the 4th of April, 397, S. Ambrose expired, having lain for several hours with his hands extended in the form of a cross, and moving his lips in constant prayer, though his words could not be understood. He was about fifty-seven years old, and had been Bishop twenty-two years and four months. His body now reposes under the high Altar of the Ambrosian Basilic at Milan; and his festival is kept on the 7th of December, the day on which he was ordained Bishop.²

S. LEO THE GREAT,

POPE.

A.D. 461.

S. LEO was descended of a noble Tuscan family, but born at Rome. Being made archdeacon of Rome, he had the chief direction of the most important affairs under Pope Celestine. He was sent to compose some differences that arose between Aëtius and Albinus, two generals of the Emperor Valentinian III.; and during his absence, Sixtus III. dying, in 440, the Roman clergy elected him for their pastor, and he was consecrated Pope on Sunday the 29th of September, 440. He refuted the Manichees, Arians, Apollinarians, Nestorians, Euty-

¹ In the Vulgate, the 43d.

² In our own calendar his name occurs on April 4th, the day of his death.

chians, Novatians, and Donatists, whose respective heresies were chiefly prevalent in the East. By his authority the general Council of Chalcedon, consisting of 600 or 630 Bishops, was opened on the 8th of October, 451. S. Leo presided by his legates, Paschasinus, Bishop of Lilybæum, Lucentius, Bishop of Ascoli, and Boniface, a priest of Rome, and confirmed all the decrees that related to faith. But the Saint, averse from any innovation, strenuously withstood the 28th canon of the Council, which declared the Archbishop of Constantinople a patriarch, and first among the Bishops of the East, that see having before been subject to the Metropolitan of Heraclea in Thrace. The Eastern Bishops, however, allowed him that pre-eminence, which custom has now confirmed.

Whilst the Eastern empire was thus distracted by heresy, the Western was attacked by the barbarians; and Attila, called the Scourge of God, whose instrument he certainly was in punishing the sins of Christians, marched against Rome. At the request of the whole city, S. Leo went out to meet him, together with Avienus and Trygetius, who were deputed to accompany him. They met the tyrant at Ambuleium, near Ravenna, who received the Pope with honour, and, through his suggestion, concluded a treaty of peace with the empire. It is said that Attila saw the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul standing on each side of the Pope whilst he spoke. He immediately repassed the Alps, and died in his way home, in 453. Two years after, S. Leo went out in a similar manner to meet Genseric, who was advancing upon the city, and prevailed with him to restrain his troops from slaughter, and to content themselves with plunder. After this ravage of the city, the Saint's chief cares were to supply the captives who were sent over to Africa with relief, and to repair the basilics, and replace the plate and ornaments of which the churches had been stripped. He filled the See of Rome twenty-one years, one month, and thirteen days, dying on the 10th of November, 461.

S. CÆSARIUS,

ARCHBISHOP OF ARLES, CONFESSOR.

A.D. 542.

S. CÆSARIUS was born in 470, in the territory of Chalons on the Saone, and was descended from a family of eminent piety. When but seven years old, he often gave his clothes to poor people, whom he met begging. In his youth he laid a good foundation of literature ;

and comparing the vices and follies of the world with the calmness and security of a holy retreat, he resolved to embrace the religious state. Accordingly, at eighteen years of age, he entreated Sylvester, Bishop of Chalons, to give him the ecclesiastical habit and tonsure, and enlisted himself thus in the service of the Church. Two years after, out of a desire of obtaining still greater perfection, he withdrew to the monastery of Lerins, then greatly flourishing under the direction of the Abbot Porcarius. In this house he was a perfect model of regularity, meekness, humility, and obedience. The Abbot appointed him cellarer; but removed him again from this office in consequence of jealousies that arose from his scrupulous severity in the discharge of his duties,—to the great joy of Cæsarius, who now found himself at liberty to devote his time more entirely to the exercises of contemplation and penance. His great austerities having brought on a fit of illness, his Abbot sent him to Arles for advice, where he was known to Eonius, the Archbishop, who was his countryman and relation. Eonius, having obtained leave from Porcarius to retain the Saint in his service, ordained him deacon and priest, and soon after made him abbot of a monastery, built on an island of the Rhone, within the suburbs of the city. Three years after, lying on his death-bed, he recommended him for his successor. The Saint fled, and hid himself among the sumptuous Roman tombs, a great number of which are still remaining near the city; but he was obliged to acquiesce in the unanimous election of the clergy and the whole city, in the year 501. He was then thirty years old, and presided over that Church above forty years.

Being a great lover of public prayer, his first care was to regulate the singing of all the canonical hours of the Divine Office, which he caused to be performed publicly every day, and not on Sundays and Festivals only, as had unhappily become the custom; and he took pains to induce the laity to attend all the hours of Divine Service. The Office was sung in some churches in the Latin, in others in the Greek tongue, according to the language of the different congregations in the city; and he was very careful to instruct his flock in all the conditions of devout prayer, teaching them to cry to God, not with their lips only, but with the earnest desires of their hearts. He devoted himself exclusively to prayer, reading, and preaching, leaving to stewards the care of all his temporalities. Knowing that the Church puts the poor under the special protection of the Bishops, he consecrated to them almost his whole revenue, and built many hospitals. He preached on all Sundays and Holy days, and often on other days, both morning and evening; and if hindered, he caused

homilies of the Fathers to be read to the people after Matins and Vespers. He was anxious that the people should never depart from the Church without instruction. His style is plain, natural, and pleasing. Many of his sermons have been ascribed to S. Ambrose, and others to S. Austin.

S. Cæsarius built a nunnery at Arles, and assisted in the building, working with his own hands. It was at first called St. John's, but afterwards took the name of S. Cæsarius, who committed the government of it to his sister Cæsaria. Our Saint drew up an excellent rule for these religious women, and also one for monks. Some of his letters relating to monastic duties have reached us, with his testament, in which he leaves his patrimony to his sister's monastery. S. Cæsarius presided in the Council of Agde in 506; also in the second Council of Orange in 529, the canons of which he drew up. In them was condemned the heresy of the Semipelagians, who affirmed that the first desire or beginning of faith and good works is from the creature. This council pronounces an anathema against those who blasphemously affirm that God predestinates any man to damnation; on the other side, it declares that, according to the Catholic faith, God inspires into our souls, by His grace, the beginning of His faith and love, or the first desire or good disposition of the soul towards it, and that He is the Author of our conversion. This, and other like points, are confirmed by passages from the holy Scriptures and Fathers, chiefly S. Austin, which establish the necessity of grace to all our good thoughts and actions conducing to eternal blessedness. S. Cæsarius sent the decrees of this council to Rome, to be confirmed by Pope Felix IV., which act was executed in the most ample manner by his successor, Boniface II., and from that time the Semipelagians were ranked by the whole Church among heretics. They ventured to maintain their errors afterwards in the Council of Valence, whither our Saint, hindered by his infirmities from going in person, sent Cyprian, Bishop of Toulon, his biographer, to defend the truth, a commission of which he acquitted himself with great zeal.

S. Cæsarius had his share of the public calamities of the age in which he lived. He fell under a false suspicion of plotting against the government of Alaric, to whom the city of Arles was then subject, and was banished to Bourdeaux. During his residence in that city, he put a stop to a destructive fire by his prayers; whereupon Alaric, becoming convinced of his innocence, recalled him to his church, and condemned his accuser to death, but pardoned him at the intercession of the Saint.

On his return to Arles, all the people went to meet him with great joy, and attributed to his prayers some plentiful showers that fell at that time after a long drought. He was thrown into prison by the Goths in 508, upon suspicion of attempting to deliver up the city to the French and Burgundians, who were besieging it; but he was cleared and set at liberty. The siege was raised, and a great number of prisoners were brought into the city, so that the churches were filled with them. Our Saint made it his business to supply these poor prisoners with all necessaries, and employed the whole treasury of his church for the purpose. He stripped the pillars and rails of the silver which was on them, and melted down the very censers, chalices, and patens, saying, "Our Lord celebrated His last Supper in mean earthen dishes, not in plate; and we need not scruple to part with His vessels for the ransom of those whom He has redeemed with His own life. I would fain know if those who censure what we do, would not be glad to be ransomed themselves in the like manner, were the same misfortune to befall them." He took the utmost care of the sick, and provided means for their hearing the Divine Office whilst they lay in their beds;¹ and the poor had always very easy access to him.

When Theodoric seized upon those countries, S. Cæsarius fell under his displeasure, on account of charity shewn towards the prisoners, and was ordered by him to Ravenna; but upon seeing the Saint's venerable aspect, he courteously returned his salute, and would not hear any evil of him. He sent him a silver basin, with three hundred pieces of gold. The Saint sold the basin publicly, and ransomed several captives with the money. The king expatiated largely upon this charity, so that all the court bestowed bountiful alms to be distributed by the Saint's hands. At Ravenna he also restored to health, by means of his prayers, a certain widow's son, whom, at the request of his mother, he took into his service, and carried back with him into Gaul.

From Ravenna, S. Cæsarius went to Rome, where Pope Symmachus gave him the pallium, confirmed in his favour the privileges of the Church of Arles, appointed him his Vicar, and gave him ecclesiastical superintendence over the whole of Gaul and Spain. This was in the year 513. S. Cæsarius returned to Arles in 514. In the seventy-second year of his age, being broken with infirmities, and finding himself near death, he expressed a wish to

¹ Those who have visited the Hospital of S. Cross, near Winchester, will remember a similar instance of considerate tenderness towards the sick in the arrangement of the rooms.

die on the Festival of S. Austin, saying, " I always loved his truly Catholic doctrine." He caused himself to be carried to the monastery of his nuns ; and, having given them his blessing, returned to the metropolitan church, where he died in the presence of several holy bishops and priests, on the eve of the Feast of S. Austin in 542.

S. GREGORY THE GREAT,

POPE AND CONFESSOR.

A.D. 604.

S. GREGORY, from his illustrious actions and extraordinary virtues, surnamed the Great, was born at Rome about the year 540. His father Gordianus was a senator, and very wealthy ; but, after the birth of our Saint, renounced the world, and died one of the seven Cardinal Deacons of the city. His mother, Sylvia, consecrated herself to God in a little oratory near S. Paul's. S. Gregory applied himself in his youth to the study of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, as well as the civil law and canons of the Church. In 574, when he was thirty-four years of age, he was appointed, by the Emperor Justin the Younger, prætor of Rome. After the death of his father, he built and endowed six monasteries in Sicily, out of the estates which he had in that island, and finished a seventh in his own house in Rome, which was the famous monastery of S. Andrew, on the hill Scaurus, now possessed by the order of Camaldoli. The first abbot of this house was Hilarion, the second Valentinus, under whom S. Gregory himself took the monastic habit in 575, being thirty-five years old.

It was before his advancement to the see of Rome, or even to the government of his monastery, that he first projected the conversion of the English nation. This great blessing took its rise from the following circumstance : Gregory happened one day to walk through the slave-market, and seeing certain youths of fine features exposed for sale, asked of what country they were, and was answered that they came from Britain. He asked if the people of that country were Christians or heathen ; and being told that they were heathen, he heaved a deep sigh, saying, " Sad indeed is it, that the Prince of Darkness should be master of so much beauty !"¹ And this incident made so great an impression upon him, that he applied himself

¹ It is said also, that upon hearing the name of the nation, " Angli," he remarked that, but for their false religion, they might be called Angeli ; or made use of some such words.

soon after to Pope Benedict I., earnestly requesting that some persons might be sent to preach Christianity in Britain, and offering himself for the service, with the Pope's consent and approbation. Having obtained leave, he started upon his journey, in company with other monks of his own monastery; but was recalled, the people being urgent with the Pope, that he should not leave the city. The Saint was afterwards appointed one of the seven Cardinal Deacons, and sent by Pelagius II. to Constantinople, on a special mission to the Emperor Tiberius, by whom he was received with the highest honour. It was here that the Saint was called upon to refute an erroneous opinion that had been propounded by Eutychius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, to the effect that the bodies of glorified Saints were not palpable, but of a light and subtle texture. S. Gregory completely convinced the good Bishop of the heretical nature of this doctrine, and he died laying his hand upon his arm, and saying, "I profess the belief that we shall all rise in this very flesh."

In the year 590, on the death of Pelagius II., our Saint was unanimously elected, by the Roman clergy and people, to succeed him; and though he used every effort, and even stratagem, to escape from the office, he was consecrated on the 3d of September in the same year. He was most diligent in preaching, and strict in the ordering of Divine Service; one of his first cares being to reform the Church-music.¹ He was likewise most careful of the poor, attentive to the redemption of captives, and lenient towards heretics who were penitent and desired reconciliation with the Church. His humility was most striking; he was the first Pope that subscribed himself servant of the servants of God, which style he adopted out of the depth of his self-abasement; and the words have been retained by all his successors.

The state of Christendom was at that time miserably distracted, and stood in need of a pastor whose extraordinary sanctity, abilities, and courage, should render him equal to great enterprises; and such an one was Gregory. The Eastern Churches were divided by the Nestorians, and the numerous sects that arose out of the Eutychian heresy, all which he repressed. In the West, England² was buried

¹ He is well known as having composed, or collected, the beautiful Psalm-chants which are in use to this day; having been scrupulously preserved by the Church in the form in which they were left by him.

² The charitable work in regard to our Saxon forefathers, which the holy Pope had prepared himself to execute in person, was reserved for him, by Divine Providence, to bring to a happy conclusion through the agency of others. Though prevented from taking part in the enterprise he had projected for their

in idolatry, and Spain overrun with the Arian heresy. These two countries owe their conversion, in a great measure, to his zeal, especially the former. In Africa he extirpated the Donatists; converted many schismatics in Istria; reformed abuses in Gaul; and in Italy

conversion to the faith of Christ, he never ceased to recommend to God the souls of this infidel nation. When he was placed in the Apostolic Chair, he immediately turned his thoughts towards this quarter, and resolved to send thither a select body of zealous preachers. For this great work none seemed better qualified than Augustine, then prior of S. Gregory's monastery, dedicated to S. Andrew, in Rome. Him, therefore, the holy Pope appointed superior of this mission; allotting him several monks for his companions. On their passage through Gaul the missionaries were so alarmed at the reports they heard of the difficulties of the undertaking, that they despatched S. Austin back to Rome for leave to return. The Pope, however, would by no means allow the expedition to be given up, but sent S. Austin back with a letter of encouragement, exhorting them not to listen to the evil suggestions of designing men, and expressing his anxious desire for the happiness of bearing them company, and sharing in their labours, had it been possible. Thus comforted, the zealous missionaries pursued their journey, and landed in the Isle of Thanet in the year 596, being in all nearly forty in number. From this place S. Augustine sent to Ethelbert, the king of Kent, signifying that he was come from Rome, and brought him a most happy message, with an assured divine promise of a kingdom which would never have an end. The king ordered them to remain in that island, where he took care they should be provided with all necessaries, whilst he deliberated what to do. This prince was not a stranger to the Christian religion, his queen Bertha being a Christian, and having with her Luidhard, Bishop of Senlis, for her director and almoner. After some days the king went in person to the isle; and the religious men came to him in procession, "carrying for their banner a silver cross, and an image of our Saviour painted on a board, and singing the Litany as they walked." Being admitted into the presence of the king, they preached to him the word of life: the king answered, that their promises indeed were fair, but new, and to him uncertain; however, that since they had come a great way for his sake, they should not be molested, nor hindered from preaching to his subjects. He appointed them a dwelling-place in Canterbury, whither they came in procession, singing, and imitated the lives of the Apostles, serving God in prayer, watching and fasting, despising the things of this world, as persons who belonged to another, and ready to suffer or die for the faith which they preached. There stood near the city an old church of S. Martin, in which the queen was accustomed to perform her devotions; and in it the Apostolic preachers began to meet, sing, say mass, preach, and baptise; till the king being converted, they had license to repair and build churches every where. Several among the people were converted, and received the holy Sacrament of regeneration; and in a short time the king himself, whose conversion was followed by innumerable others. Within a year of the first landing of the missionaries, S. Austin was ordained Bishop, in October 597; for which purpose he proceeded to Arles, and was consecrated by Virgilius, the Archbishop of that Church and Papal Legate. Immediately after his return to his own see, he sent Laurence and Peter to Rome to solicit a supply of more labourers; and they brought over several excellent disciples of the holy Pope, among whom were

repressed the Lombards, converted many from idolatry, and brought over Agilulph, their king, from Arianism. In 592 the barbarians besieged Rome itself; but S. Gregory raised troops for the defence of the city, and at length engaged the Lombards to retire to their own territories. The exactions of the Emperor were at that time most galling to the people, upon which the Saint wrote boldly to the Empress, entreating for a remission of such rigours. He exercised authority over the Oriental Patriarchs, and reproved John, the Patriarch of Constantinople, for using arrogant titles that did not belong to him. In opposition to this, S. Gregory took no other titles than those of humility. He reproved Gregoria, a lady of the court, for impatiently desiring assurance of the forgiveness of her sins, saying that she ought always to fear and tremble for them, and

Mellitus, the first Bishop of London; Justus, the first Bishop of Rochester; Paulinus, the first Archbishop of York; and Rufinianus, the third Abbot of S. Augustine's. "With this colony," writes Bede, "the holy Pope sent all things in general use for the divine worship and the service of the Church, viz.: sacred vessels, altar-cloths, ornaments for churches, vestments for priests and clerks, relics of the holy Apostles and Martyrs, and many books." S. Augustine wrote frequently to S. Gregory, and consulted him in all things. The Pope directed him to convert the idol-temples to the purposes of the Church; and he permitted the celebration of wakes on the anniversary feasts of the dedications of churches, and on the solemnities of the Martyrs, the more easily to withdraw the people from their heathenish riotous festivals.

The good King Ethelbert laboured in promoting the conversion of his subjects during the twenty remaining years of his life, and seemed to regard his kingly office only valuable as enabling him to enlarge the kingdom of the King of kings. He built Christ Church, the Cathedral of Canterbury; and founded the Abbey of SS. Peter and Paul, without the walls of that city, since called S. Augustine's; the Church of S. Andrew at Rochester, and many others. He departed to our Lord in 616, and is commemorated as a Saint in the Roman Martyrology on the 24th of February.

In the year 600 S. Gregory sent a letter of congratulation and advice to the king, and the pallium to the Archbishop, with authority to ordain twelve Bishops, who should be subject to his metropolitan see; and to erect another metropolitan see at York, with a similar number of suffragans, when the Christian religion had penetrated into the north; but circumstances afterwards hindered the full execution of this project. S. Augustine ordained S. Mellitus, Bishop of London, and S. Justus, Bishop of Rochester. He also undertook a journey for the purpose of holding conferences with the British Bishops, of whom he demanded only three things: First, that they should assist him in preaching the Gospel to the English; secondly, that they should observe Easter at the due time; thirdly, that they should agree with the Universal Church in the manner of administering Baptism. He appealed to miracles, as well as arguments, in order to convince them of the truth of his doctrine on these points, but without success. S. Augustine, whilst yet living, ordained Laurence his successor in the see of Canterbury: he died on the 26th of May, in the same year with S. Gregory, viz. 604.

make them a subject of daily tears ; for that security is the mother of negligence. The Emperor had put some unlawful restrictions upon the admission of officers and soldiers into monasteries, upon which the Saint remonstrated in the strongest manner against the edict, saying, " That by it the way to heaven was shut to several ; for many cannot be saved unless they forsake all things." Mauritius was highly offended at first at this remonstrance, but at length agreed to certain mitigations proposed by the Pope, which the Saint notified by letter to the Bishops of the empire. In the year 604 it became evident that the weaknesses under which the holy Pope had laboured for many years were increasing, and that his end was approaching. His last act was that of giving several parcels of land to S. Paul's Church, to furnish it with lights. This was on the Festival of that Apostle's Conversion : and God called him to Himself the 12th of March following, in the year 604, about the sixty-fourth year of his age, after a reign of thirteen years six months and ten days. His Festival was observed as a public holy day in England until the 16th century.

S. BEDE,

CONFESSOR, FATHER OF THE CHURCH.

A.D. 735.

VENERABLE BEDE was born in 673, in the neighbourhood of Jarrow, and when seven years old was committed to the care of S. Bennet Biscop, founder of that monastery. He afterwards removed thither, and, under the direction of the Abbot Ceolfrid, made great progress in his studies, particularly in the Greek language. But his Comments on the holy Scriptures and his Sermons prove that meditation in the Word of God, and the writings of the Fathers, engaged his chief attention. He tells us that he applied himself wholly to meditating on the Scriptures, and that, together with the observance of regular discipline, and the daily care of chanting in the church, it was his delight to be always employed either in learning, teaching, or writing. His great piety and endowments supplying the defect of age, he was ordained deacon, when nineteen years old, by S. John of Beverley, and priest at thirty years of age, by the same S. John. From this time he began to compose books, gathering them, as he tells us, out of the works of the venerable Fathers, or adding new comments, in accordance with their sense and interpretation. At the age of fifty-

nine, he gives us a list of forty-five works which he had then composed, of which thirty consist of comments on the Old and New Testament. His works also treat of natural philosophy, the principles of Aristotle, Astronomy, Arithmetic, the Calendar, Ecclesiastical History, and the Lives of Saints. But what we have most to admire in Bede is the piety with which he pursued and sanctified his studies; his life was a model of devotion, obedience, humility, and charity. Though invited to Rome by Pope Sergius, who desired to see and consult him on matters of importance, he lived from his childhood in his monastery, without travelling abroad, and declined the dignity of Abbot, which was offered to him.

Egbert, brother of the King of Northumberland, had been a scholar of Bede; and, being promoted to the see of York, pressed him to come thither, which he did, and taught there for some months. The school thus established became very famous, and Alcuin was afterwards a scholar there. Our Saint likewise wrote Egbert a letter of advice on his promotion, wherein he reminds him that it was part of his duty to place every where able and learned priests, to labour strenuously himself in the correction of vice and conversion of sinners, and to take care that every one knew the Lord's prayer and the Creed, and was well instructed in the articles of our holy religion. He also advises that all of the laity whose lives were pure should communicate every Sunday, and on the Festivals of the Apostles and Martyrs, as Egbert himself (he says) had seen practised at Rome. Within a year after the accession of Egbert, Venerable Bede died; and we have an account of the last days of his life from one of his scholars, Cuthbert, afterwards Abbot of Jarrow. It is contained in a letter to one who had been his school-fellow under Bede; and the secluded tenour of his life affords so few incidents for biography, that we have room for a translation of the whole epistle, as it stands in the Preface to the late edition of his Ecclesiastical History. From it we may gather what were the lives of those whose lot it was to enter a monastery at an early age, and there to devote themselves to study and devotion. Such was the happiness of Venerable Bede; he was trained under the direction of Saints, and by their example and instructions learned, from his infancy, the maxims and practice of perfect sanctity.

“To his most beloved in Christ and fellow-reader Cuthwin, his school-fellow Cuthbert wishes salvation in the Lord.

The little present which you have sent me was very acceptable, and I read with much gratification your letters, wherein I found what I greatly desired, that masses and holy prayers are diligently

said by you for the father beloved of God, our master Bede. Wherefore, for the love I bear him, I the more gladly send you a brief account of the manner in which he departed this life, understanding this to be what you desire.

He began to be much afflicted with difficulty of breathing, though without pain, about two weeks before the day of the Lord's Resurrection; and so continued, cheerful and rejoicing, giving thanks to Almighty God day and night, nay, every hour, till the day of our Lord's Ascension, which was the 26th of May. He daily gave lessons to us his disciples, the remainder of his time he passed in chanting Psalms; the whole night also he lay awake rejoicing and giving thanks, except when interrupted by a little slumber. And as soon as he woke up again, he returned to his wonted exercises, ceasing not to give thanks to God. O truly happy man! He sung the sentence of the Blessed Apostle Paul—"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"¹ and many other texts out of Holy Writ, admonishing us thereby to rouse our souls from sleep by thinking on our last hour. In the English tongue too, being conversant with our poetry, he recited some verses to this effect:—"That no man is so wise as not to need consideration with respect to his soul—before its departure hence—what good or evil it hath done, and what judgment it is like to receive after death."

For our comfort and his own, he also chanted antiphons, of which one is:—"O King of glory, Lord of hosts, who didst on this day ascend in triumph above all heavens, leave us not comfortless, but send down on us the promised of the Father, the Spirit of truth, Alleluia."² And when he came to that word, "leave us not comfortless," he burst into tears, and wept much; and an hour after, he began to repeat again what he had commenced; and we, hearing these things, mourned with him. By turns we read, by turns we wept—nay, we continually wept while reading. In such sort we passed the season of Pentecost till the before-mentioned day; and he himself rejoiced greatly, and gave thanks to God that such affliction was vouchsafed to him. He often repeated, "The Lord scourgeth every son whom He receiveth;"³ and much out of Holy Scripture; that sentence also of S. Ambrose, "I have not so lived as to be ashamed to remain among you; nor am I afraid to die, for we have a good God."

¹ Heb. x. 31.

² The antiphon, to this day, at the Magnificat in the Office of the Ascension, on the eve of which our Saint died.

³ Heb. xii. 6.

During these days, besides the lessons which he gave us, and the chanting of Psalms, he was intent on composing two works; one was, the translation of S. John's Gospel into our tongue, for the benefit of the Church; the other, some collections out of Bishop Isidore's Book of Notes; for he said, "I will not have my scholars read a falsehood, and labour herein without profit after my death." On Tuesday before the Lord's Ascension he began to be much worse in his breathing, and a slight swelling appeared in his feet. But he taught all that day, and dictated cheerfully, saying now and then, "Make haste with your learning, for I know not how long I shall hold out, and whether my Creator will not soon take me away." But it seemed to us he was well aware his departure was at hand, and so he lay awake through the night engaged in thanksgiving.

As soon as it was light on the Wednesday, he bade us write diligently the task we had begun, and we did so till the third hour (nine o'clock, A.M.). After this we walked in procession¹ with the relics of the Saints, according to the custom of that day; then one of us said to him, "Most dear master, there is still one chapter wanting; but it seems painful to you to be asked any more questions." But he replied, "It is no trouble; take your pen, prepare your tablet, and write quickly," which he did. At the ninth hour (three o'clock, P.M.) he said to me, "I have some little valuables in my chest—some peppercorns, handkerchiefs, and incense—run quickly and fetch all the priests of our monastery, that I may divide among them such gifts as God has given me. The rich in this world desire to give gold and silver and other precious things, but I will gladly and lovingly bestow on my brethren that little which God hath given me." When they came, he addressed each of them, beseeching him to be diligent in offering up the Eucharist and prayers for him; to which they readily pledged themselves.

And all sorrowed and wept "most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more"² in this world; but they rejoiced to hear him say, "It is time for me to return to Him who made me, who created me, who formed me out of nothing. I have lived long; well did my gracious Judge fore-ordain my life for me; the time of my departure is at hand; I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." With these and many other words he passed the day in joy until the evening; then the aforesaid youth said to him, "Dear master, there is still one sentence that is not written." He replied, "Write quickly." The young man said, "Now it is

¹ This was the procession of the Rogations on the eve of Ascension-day.

² Acts xx. 38.

done." He replied, " You have well said ; all is finished ; hold my head in your hands, for it is a pleasure to me to sit and look upon the little holy spot, where I used to pray ; support me that I also may sit up and call on my Father." And sitting thus on the floor of his cell, he sang, " Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ;" and when he had named the Holy Ghost, he breathed his last, and so passed into heaven.

But all who were present at the blessed father's death declared they had never seen any one make so holy and peaceful an end. So long as his soul was in his body, he never ceased, as you have heard, to give thanks to God, with his hands expanded, repeating, Glory be to the Father, and other spiritual songs.

There is much more, my dearest brother, I could relate of him, but my want of skill in the Latin tongue obliges me to be brief."

S. Bede died in the year 735, aged 62, on Wednesday evening the 26th of May, after the first Vespers of our Lord's Ascension. He was buried at Jarrow ; but in 1020 his remains were conveyed to Durham, and placed first in S. Cuthbert's shrine, and afterwards in a separate shrine in the Cathedral there. The epithet of " Venerable," by which he is distinguished, appears first to have been bestowed upon him in the ninth century, and is frequently employed by writers of that period.

S. BERNARD,

ABBOT.

A.D. 1153.

S. BERNARD, the great ornament of the 12th century, was the third son of Tescelin and Alice, both of the first nobility in Burgundy, and related to the dukes, particularly Alice, who was a daughter of Bernard, lord of Mombard. The Saint was born in 1091, at Fontaines, a castle near Dijon, and a lordship belonging to his father. His mother, not content with offering him to God, as she had done in the case of all her seven children, afterwards consecrated him to His service in the Church, like another Hannah, hoping that he would one day be worthy to serve the Altar. She brought up all her children with great care and prudence. Their names were Guy, Gerard, Bernard, Humbeline, Andrew, Bartholomew, and Nivard. The other sons were set to learn military exercises ; but Bernard was sent to Chatillon on the Seine, to pursue his studies in a college of secular priests, who were canons of that church. He even then loved to be alone, was always recollected,

obedient, obliging to all, and modest beyond expression. He made it his continual earnest prayer to God, that He would never suffer him to sully his innocence by sin, and he gave all the money he got to the poor. He made great advances in his studies, but was still more solicitous to advance in the knowledge and love of God. One Christmas night he had a Vision of the Divine Infant Jesus ; and from that time he ever had a most tender devotion to the great mystery of the Infancy. He was still at Chatillon, and in the nineteenth year of his age, when his mother died. She had a habit of inviting all the clergy of Dijon to celebrate the Festival of S. Ambrose in her castle. On the Vigil of that day in 1110, she was seized with a fever ; and on the Festival itself happily expired in the midst of this religious company.

Bernard upon this event returned to Fontaines, and became his own master ; but he had not been long in the bustle of the world before he became alarmed at its innumerable snares and dangers, and began to think of forsaking it, and retiring to Citeaux, where God was served with great fervour. He was some time undecided ; and one day going to see his brothers, who were then engaged in the siege of the castle of Grancei, in great anxiety he stepped into a church on the road, and prayed with many tears that God would direct him to discover and follow His Holy Will. He arose steadily fixed in the resolution of embracing the severe Cistercian institute. At first his brothers and friends dissuaded him from this step ; but at length he so far prevailed as to draw them all over to join him in his undertaking. Gauldri, lord of Touillon, the Saint's uncle, first came into this resolution. Next, Bartholomew and Andrew, Bernard's younger brothers. Then Guy, the eldest ; after him Gerard ; and, lastly, Hugh of Macon, an intimate friend of S. Bernard, who afterwards founded the monastery of Pontigni, and died Bishop of Auxerre. They all assembled in a house at Chatillon to prepare themselves for their undertaking. When they went to Fontaines to take their farewell of their father, brother, and sister, Guy said to Nivard, who was then a mere child, " Adieu, Nivard ; you will have all our estates." Upon which the boy answered, " What ! you then take Heaven, and leave me only the Earth ; the division is too unequal." They went away at that time ; but Nivard soon followed them, leaving their sister S. Humbeline to take care of their aged father.

Bernard was joined by thirty noblemen and gentlemen, including his brothers. They stayed six months at Chatillon to settle their affairs, and then set out for the monastery of Citeaux, which was then governed by S. Stephen. This holy company arrived there in

1113, and, prostrating themselves before the gate, begged to be admitted to join the monks in their penitential lives. S. Stephen received them with open arms and gave them the habit. S. Bernard was then twenty-three years old. So perfect was his recollection of spirit, that, as is related of him, after a year's noviciate he did not know whether the top of his cell was covered with a ceiling, or not; nor whether the church had more than one window, though it had three. He made his profession in the hands of S. Stephen, with all his companions, in 1114. So great was his advancement in all the virtues of his state, that, in the very next year, S. Stephen, finding it necessary to reduce still further the number of monks at Citeaux (although similar reductions had taken place in the two previous years, by the founding in 1113 of the Abbey of La Ferté, and in 1114 that of Pontigni), gave him a crosier, appointed him abbot over twelve monks, among whom were his brothers, and sent him to found a new house in the Diocese of Langres in Champagne, on a spot of ground offered by Hugh, earl of Troyes, for that purpose. They walked in procession, singing psalms, with their new abbot at their head, and settled in a desert called the Valley of Wormwood. They had much to suffer, but were often relieved, when reduced to extreme necessity, in some sudden unexpected manner. The reputation of this house in a short time became so great that the number of monks in it amounted to 130; and the country gave this valley the name of Clara-vallis, or Clarval. It is now commonly called Clairvaux, and is situated eleven leagues from Langres in Champagne.

The following year the Saint fell into a dangerous illness, which made the good Bishop of Chalons, William of Champeaux, his great friend and admirer, so apprehensive for his life, that he repaired to the Chapter of the Order then holding at Citeaux, and obtained authority to govern him as his immediate superior for one year. Armed with this commission, he hastened to Clairvaux, and lodged the abbot in a house without the enclosure, with orders that he should not observe the rule with regard to eating, and should be wholly discharged from the cares of the community. By this means his life was preserved; and after a year, S. Bernard returned in good health to his monastery, and to the practice of his former austerities. His aged father came to him at this time, received the habit of the Order from the Saint's hands, and died happily soon after at Clairvaux.

The filiations, as they are called, of the original monastery of S. Stephen at Citeaux were very numerous and prosperous. Its four first daughters were La Ferté, Pontigni, Clairvaux, and Morimond, each of which became a mother-house to many others. Subordinate

to the Abbey of Morimond are reckoned seven hundred benefices, and five military orders are subject to it, those of Calatrava, Alcantara, Montesa, Avis, and Christi. But Clairvaux has the most numerous offspring. S. Bernard founded, in 1118, the Abbey of the Three Fountains, in the diocese of Chalons; that of Fontenay, in the diocese of Autun; and that of Tarouca in Portugal; and in 1121, the Abbey of Foigni, in the diocese of Laon, in which the venerable Bishop of that see made his monastic profession.¹ By his preaching and great virtues he attracted very many from the world to a religious life. He was so little solicitous for the interest of his own Order, that he gave up to others several valuable foundations which were first offered to him. He was many times elected Bishop of Langres and Chalons, and Archbishop of Genoa, Milan, and Rheims; but so strenuously opposed all such propositions, that the Popes were unwilling to do too great violence to his humility. Nevertheless, so great a regard was had to his decisions, that the greatest bishops and princes solicited his counsel; and it may be almost said of him, that even in his solitude he governed all the Churches of the West; and he always used his influence for the prevention of unworthy appointments, and the reformation of Bishops and Abbots who led lives unsuitable to their station.

In 1130 the Saint had to espouse the cause of Innocent II. against the antipope Anacletus, which he did with great zeal, and contributed more than any other of his adherents to win over to the true Pope the nations of France, England, and Germany. He was able to return to his monastery in 1134, but was soon called abroad again, to oppose William, duke of Guienne, who favoured the schism, and had deposed the Bishops of Poitiers and Limoges; wherein he fully succeeded, persuading the duke to renounce the schism, and to restore the expelled Bishops; shortly after which the duke completely repented of his sins, and died happily on a pilgrimage to Compostella. Thus by the prudence and zeal of S. Bernard was this schism ex-

¹ In 1124 his sister S. Humbeline embraced the religious state in a nunnery founded a short time before by our Saint, at Billette or Julli in the diocese of Langres; and by the abundance of graces that God bestowed upon her, arrived at so high a degree of sanctity as to be the admiration of all who saw her, and a subject of the greatest joy to her holy brother and director. She often watched almost the whole night in singing psalms, and meditating on the Sacred Passion of Christ, taking only a little rest on some boards. Thus she lived seventeen years: in her last sickness she was visited by S. Bernard; and amidst his prayers and exhortations, in sentiments of holy joy and humble confidence in the Divine mercy, she breathed out her holy soul on the 21st of August 1141. Her name is commemorated among the Saints.

tinguished in so many kingdoms; but it was not finally put an end to until the death of the false pope Anacletus, which took place in 1138. Hereupon the Saint sued to the Pope for the pardon of those who had been engaged in the schism.

External disturbances were not the only occasions on which S. Bernard shewed his zeal in defence of the Church. He lost no opportunity of opposing heresies and false opinions whenever they came before him. He refuted the many heretical and pernicious doctrines of Abelard, who finally repented of his errors, and died happily in the monastery of Cluni. Arnold of Brescia, Gilbert de la Porree, also fell under his powerful rebuke. The Saint encouraged learning in his monasteries, all of which he took care to provide with libraries, as the only means by which the heresies which arose out of the abuse of the scholastic philosophy, in the twelfth century, could be refuted.

The Saint founded before his death one hundred and sixty monasteries, and left seven hundred monks in that of Clairvaux; and, before the dissolution of religious houses, eight hundred houses of the Cistercian order were reckoned as filiations of Clairvaux alone. Many great men were drawn from the world by the Saint's preaching and miracles, among whom was his namesake Bernard of Pisa, whom he appointed Abbot of the Monastery of the Three Fountains, commonly called of SS. Vincent and Anastasius, at Rome. This Bernard succeeded to the Popedom, by the title of Eugenius III. To him the Saint wrote his book on Consideration; hoping thereby to maintain in him, in the midst of his secular cares, a spirit of recollection and prayer; and under his commission S. Bernard devoted himself with great zeal, in 1147, in promoting the second Crusade, which he executed with incredible success in all the chief cities and provinces of France and Germany. King Louis VII. of France took the cross on this occasion, in an assembly of the chief barons of the nation, leaving the Abbot Suger lieutenant of the kingdom. The ill success of this crusade is chiefly to be ascribed to the treachery of the Greeks; but the finger of God was visible in chastising the sins of the army, a great part of which was composed of men led by no other motive than the love of plunder, who were lawless, and committed every kind of disorder on their march. To those who were influenced by motives of sincere penance and religion, these afflictions were trials for the exercise of their virtue. This unfortunate expedition raised a great storm against S. Bernard, because he had seemed to promise success. His answer was, that he confided in the Divine mercy for a blessing on an enterprise undertaken for the

honour of His Divine Name ; but that the sins of the army were the cause of their misfortunes.

At this time, certain pestilent teachers were deceiving the people in Provence and Languedoc, by violent invectives against the Pope, Bishops, and clergy ; whereupon Cardinal Alberic was sent by the Pope, in 1147, to endeavour to apply some remedy to this evil. The legate took S. Bernard with him in this mission ; and the Saint, not only by the reputation of his sanctity, and the force and eloquence of his discourses, but also by many eminent miracles, animated the faithful, and brought back to the truth many that were seduced. The next year the Pope (Eugenius III.) visited the Saint at Clairvaux, and afterwards assisted at the general chapter of that order held at Clairvaux, in which the whole order of Savigni, consisting of thirty monasteries, passed into that of Citeaux, out of respect to S. Bernard, and so became a filiation of Clairvaux.

In the beginning of the year 1153, the Saint fell into a decay ; but recovered for a time, in answer, as he considered, to the prayers of his spiritual children. He clearly foretold them, however, that this delay would not exceed six months. During this interval he undertook a journey to Metz, and succeeded in reconciling certain parties who were at variance in that city, and in thus preventing much bloodshed. Upon his return to Clairvaux, his disorder greatly increased. Commending, therefore, his brethren to the Divine mercy, with earnest sighs of compunction and holy love, he prepared himself for his last moment ; and happily yielded up his soul to God on the 20th of August, 1153, the sixty-third of his age, having been Abbot thirty-eight years. He was buried before our Lady's Altar at Clairvaux ; and his name was solemnly enrolled among the Saints by Alexander III., in 1165.

S. ANSELM,

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, CONFESSOR.

A.D. 1109.

S. ANSELM was born of noble parents, at Aoust, in Piedmont, about the year 1033. His pious mother took care to give him early habits of piety ; and the impression instructions made upon him was as lasting as his life. Incited by the great fame of Lanfranc, Prior of Bec in Normandy, he went thither, and became his scholar. Having determined on entering the monastic state at Bec, he became a

member of that house in 1060, at the age of twenty-seven. Three years after, Lanfranc was made Abbot of S. Stephen's at Caen, and Anselm Prior of Bec. By his patience and sweetness he won the affections of all the monks, several of whom had been inclined to murmur at his promotion, on account of his youth. He applied himself diligently to the study of every part of theology; and his works shew him to have excelled, in metaphysics, all the doctors of the Church since S. Austin. His reputation drew to Bec great numbers from all the neighbouring kingdoms. He was chosen Abbot in 1078, in the forty-fifth year of his age. The Abbey of Bec was at that time possessed of some lands in England; and this occasioned his first journeys thither, which his tender regard for Lanfranc, then Archbishop of Canterbury, made the more agreeable to him. He was received with great honour by all ranks of people both in Church and State; and King William, commonly so haughty and inaccessible to his subjects, seemed to be another man in his presence. Lanfranc dying in 1089, the metropolitan see of Canterbury continued vacant until 1093, owing to the sacrilegious injustice of the king, William Rufus, who in the mean time usurped the revenues. But being seized with a violent illness, he nominated Anselm, who happened to be in England at the time, to the extreme satisfaction of all except the Saint himself, who made the greatest opposition, until the pastoral staff was forced into his hands, and he was carried into the church, where *Te Deum* was sung, on the 6th of March, 1093. He still declined the charge, until the king had promised him the restitution of all the lands that were in the possession of the see in Lanfranc's time. He was then consecrated, with great solemnity, on the 4th of December, 1093.

Anselm had not been long in possession of the see, when the king, intending to wrest the duchy of Normandy out of the hands of his brother Robert, made large demands on his subjects for supplies; and on this occasion, not content with the five hundred pounds (a very large sum in those days) offered him by the Archbishop, he insisted on a thousand for his nomination to the Archbishopric, which Anselm persevered in refusing to pay; pressing him also to fill vacant abbeys, and to consent that the Bishops should hold councils as formerly, and be allowed to repress crimes and abuses, which had greatly multiplied for want of such a remedy. From that day, the king sought to deprive him of his see; and brought over most of the Bishops to refuse obedience to him as their Primate, or as Archbishop; but could not shake the temporal nobility in their allegiance to his authority. S. Anselm received the pallium from Pope Urban II.;

and earnestly desiring to apply to him in person for his counsel and assistance, and being persuaded that he could not in conscience abide any longer in England, as a witness of the oppression of the Church, without having it in his power to remedy it, he set out in the habit of a pilgrim, with two monks, in October, 1097, and embarked at Dover. He was detained on his way in France by illness, and by danger from the party of the Antipope; but arrived in Rome the March following, in 1098. He was honourably received by the Pope, who assured him of his protection, and wrote to the king, requiring that he should be reinstated in his rights and possessions. S. Anselm retired to a cell, connected with the monastery of S. Saviour, in Calabria, where he passed his time in writing theological books; and, that he might live in the merit of obedience, he prevailed upon the Pope to appoint the monk Eadmer, his inseparable companion, as his superior; nor did he do the least thing without his leave. In despair of doing any good at Canterbury, and in the belief that he might be more serviceable to the world in a private station, he earnestly entreated the Pope to discharge him of his Bishopric; but to this the Pope would by no means consent.

The Pope, having summoned, in 1098, the council of Bari, in which the question of the Procession of the Holy Ghost was discussed, ordered the Saint to be present, and placing him next him, told him that he thought God had brought him thither to defend the Church against her enemies. Anselm spoke to the point with so much learning, judgment, and penetration, that he silenced the Greeks; and all present joined in pronouncing anathema against those who should afterwards deny the Procession of the Holy Ghost from both the Father and the Son. When the behaviour of the King of England fell next under debate, the Council was equally won by the charity of the Saint, who cast himself on his knees before the Pope, and persuaded him to stop the sentence of excommunication, which he was on the point of pronouncing against his sovereign. Anselm stayed some time at Rome with the Pope, who always placed him next in rank to himself. After the Council of Rome in 1099, at which he assisted with honour, he returned to Lyons, where he was entertained by the Archbishop Hugh with the greatest cordiality and regard. King William being snatched away by sudden death on the 2d August, 1100, S. Anselm lamented bitterly his unhappy end, and made haste to England, whither he was invited by King Henry I., who received him very graciously. But this harmony was not of long continuance. The new king required of Anselm to be re-invested by him, and to do the customary homage of his predeces-

sors for his see ; but the Saint refused to comply, and made a report of the proceedings of the late synod at Rome, in which the laity who should give investiture for abbeys or cathedrals were declared excommunicate, as well as those who should receive such investiture. The king, in the meantime, being thrown into great alarm by the invasion of England by his brother Robert, duke of Normandy, who claimed the crown, and was joined on his landing by many of the nobility, became very liberal in his promises to Anselm, who, on his part, omitted nothing to prevent a revolt ; remonstrating strongly with the nobles, and publishing an excommunication against Robert, as an invader, who accordingly came to an accommodation with Henry, and left the kingdom.

Amidst his troubles and public distractions, the Saint retired often in the day to his devotions, and watched long in them in the night. At his meals, and at all times, he conversed inwardly in heaven. One day, as he was riding, a hare, pursued by the dogs, ran under his horse for refuge. The Saint said, weeping, " This hare puts me in mind of a poor sinner just upon the point of departing this life, surrounded by devils, waiting to carry off their prey." In like manner, every object served to raise his mind to God ; so entirely did he live above the world.

The king, still persisting in his claim to the right of giving investiture for benefices, S. Anselm resolved on going in person to Rome, and accordingly embarked in April, 1103. Pope Paschal II. condemned the king's pretensions, and excommunicated those who should receive Church dignities from him. S. Anselm, being forbidden by the king to land in England, remained at Lyons, and afterwards at Bec, where articles of agreement were drawn up between him and the king, pursuant to a letter from Rome, by which a dispensation was granted to Bishops and Abbots to do homage for their temporalities. S. Anselm hereupon returned to England in 1106, and was received by the Queen Maud, and the whole kingdom, as it were in triumph.

During the latter years of his life his health was entirely broken ; and for the last six months he was carried every day into the church to assist at Holy Mass. He happily expired, laid on sackcloth and ashes, at Canterbury, on the 21st of April, 1109, in the sixteenth year of his episcopate, and the seventy-sixth of his age. He was buried in his cathedral. By a decree of Clement XI., in 1720, he is honoured among the doctors of the Church. There are authentic accounts of many miracles wrought by this Saint.

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

A.D. 1471.

THOMAS À KEMPIS was born in 1380, at Campi, a town in the diocese of Cologne, from whence he took his name. His parents, John and Gertrude, were of humble origin, and supported themselves by the daily labour of their hands; but were careful to imbue the minds of their children, from their earliest years, with lessons of holiness. When about twelve years of age, he went to Deventer, a town in Overysse, in Holland, famous at that time for its schools, to pursue his studies, in which, we are told, he made rapid progress. He was here introduced to the acquaintance of the Master Florentius, the successor of Gerard the Great, who had established a celebrated Convent of Regular Canons, under the rule of S. Austin, and who died in the odour of sanctity in 1384. The lives of both these holy men have been written by Thomas, and are preserved amongst his works. We have an account of this early period of his life from Thomas à Kempis himself; and in the description which it contains of the habits of the holy Brothers of Deventer, we probably see a picture of the kindred Society of Mount S. Agnes, an offshoot from it, in which he made his religious profession, and in which he lived for seventy-one years.

“Being sent as a youth to Deventer, to pursue my studies, I sought an opportunity of visiting the Brothers the Canons Regular at Wyndeshem. Amongst them was a brother of my own, by whose advice I was induced to gain an introduction to that highly revered man and devout priest, the Master Florentius, Vicar of the Church of Deventer, the sweet odour of whose reputation had already reached to a distance, and had inspired me with an affection for him; and whose numerous scholars were warm in their praises of him as their spiritual instructor. For a just man he was both to see and hear, and he found favour in the eyes of all; being a true worshipper of God, and most devout in his reverence for Holy Mother Church.

“I was accordingly admitted to the presence of the Reverend Father, whose kindness moved him to keep me with him for a time in his own house, and to give me instruction in school, and to supply me moreover with such books as he thought I wanted. He afterwards provided me, at his own expense, with a lodging in the house of a certain worthy and devout matron, who in many ways shewed kindness to me and many other clerics. Placed thus in the society of this devout man and his brethren, I daily beheld and

“ attended to their holy conversation, and took delight in their good
“ lives, and in the gracious words which fell from the mouths of
“ those humble men. Never before do I remember to have seen such
“ men, so devout and fervent in the love of God and their neighbour ;
“ for, while living amongst persons of the world, they had nothing of
“ the worldly life, and seemed to have no care for earthly things.
“ For, remaining quietly at home, they employed themselves busily
“ in writing books ; they were constantly engaged in sacred reading
“ and devout meditation, and during the hours of labour had recourse
“ for comfort to ejaculatory prayers. Early in the morning, after
“ reciting the matins, they visited the church ; and celebrating mass,
“ they poured forth to God the first-fruits of their lips, and the sighs
“ of their hearts ; and, prostrate in body at the offering of the precious
“ Sacrifice, they lifted up to Heaven their pure hands and the eyes of
“ their soul, seeking with prayers and lamentations to be reconciled
“ to God.

“ Of this illustrious brotherhood the first Founder and spiritual
“ Ruler was the Lord Master Florentius, a man adorned with virtues,
“ and filled with Divine wisdom and understanding in the knowledge
“ of Christ ; humbly imitating, with his priests and clerics, the
“ model of the sacred Apostolic life. Thus had they one heart and
“ one soul in God ; and brought together in common, each what was
“ his own, and received their simple food and raiment, and avoided
“ all thought for the morrow. For, dedicating themselves freely to
“ God, they were all desirous to obey their Superior or his deputy ;
“ and, holding holy obedience for the highest rule, they strove with
“ all their might to conquer themselves, and resist their passions, and
“ subdue the motions of their own will ; earnestly begging, moreover,
“ to receive serious correction for their defects and negligences.
“ Therefore were they endowed with great grace and true devotion ;
“ and many were they, whom they edified by their words and ex-
“ amples ; and, bearing with patience the ridicule of the worldly,
“ they led many to a contempt of the world. And they who had
“ before despised them, counting their life as folly and without
“ honour, being afterwards turned to God, and experiencing the
“ grace of devotion, were forced by their conscience publicly to con-
“ fess them to be true servants and friends of God.”

In the company of these holy men, Thomas had the happiness of living until he was about nineteen years of age ; when “ on a certain festival,” as his biographer tells us, “ after the celebration of the Divine Mysteries, Florentius observing his pupil to be more than usually alert, called him into his cell,” and telling him that the time

was now come for him to make choice of his future mode of life, and setting before him the necessity of giving up ourselves, whilst we have time, as an entire offering to God, who will require an account of every thought, word, and deed; and warning him of the snares and dangers to which the soul is exposed in the world, he urged him to enter the way of perfection in a religious life. "For do not suppose," said he, "that those who choose the contemplative life of the cloister thereby deprive themselves of the opportunity of earning the reward of an active life. For a very difficult work it is to be constant in prayer and praise; to be frequent in fasting, to bring the body into subjection, to keep vigils, to interrupt sleep, and, at the proper times, to practise manual labour. They who engage in this life are like the sick who are left behind with the baggage, and who, if they pray in behalf of those who are actively engaged in fighting, will have an equal portion with those who go up to the battle." He recommended, in particular, one of the houses in connexion with the original foundation of Gerard the Great. Thomas, who had been hoping for such an opportunity for some time before, could scarcely make any answer for joy, and begged that he might seek admittance into the Convent of Mount S. Agnes; which, together with that at Wyndeshem, in its neighbourhood, was a filiation (as the term is) of the parent House at Deventer, and was built above the town of Zwoll, in Overysse. He was accordingly provided, the following day, with a letter to the Head of the Convent, who "on reading the letter was "greatly rejoiced, both from his acquaintance with the youth, and "from his knowledge that Florentius would recommend no one "hastily: yet, receiving him with a severe countenance, 'I will "make trial of you,' said he, 'in your studies, character, and health, "whether you are able to bear our burdens with us;' and giving "him his hand, he brought him forward to the rest of the novices." Still, though he approved of his conduct in all respects, he was not willing, for some wise reason, that he should make his profession for six years.

He rendered himself remarkable in the Society, we are told, by his singular devotion towards God, respect to his superiors, and charity and benevolence towards the brotherhood. Sloth, the source of all evils, he never indulged, but constantly occupied himself either in reading sacred books, or in copying them for the benefit of the community, or in composing them; and in this way he was frequently employed from midnight, after the Matins and Lauds were over. "There are still to be seen," says one of his biographers, "copies of the entire Scriptures, of the Missal, and of some of the works of

S. Bernard, written in his handwriting, with singular skill and great labour. The reverence and scrupulous care which he shewed for all that related to the Chapel and the Divine Office it is difficult to describe. When engaged in chanting in choir, he was seen with his countenance always lifted up towards Heaven, inspired with a holy enthusiasm, and transported and carried beyond himself by the surprising delight which he found in the sacred employment; and he always stood in an upright posture, never leaning either with his arm or his back against the seat." The numerous sermons, devotional treatises, and biographies of holy persons, which he has left to the Church, sufficiently shew, by the spirit of exalted piety which they breathe, how diligently he employed his time for the good of others, and in the practice of a holy life. Whether he composed, or only copied, the "Imitation of Christ," is a question which has given rise to many dissertations. A copy of the book is spoken of by one of his old biographers as still existing, written by his hand; and general opinion has connected his name with it. "It is the privilege of this book," says Alban Butler, "to make Saints. The author was doubtless a Saint; and the more happy in his holy retirement and constant conversation with Heaven, as he found the art of living in entire concealment from the world." Having continued to edify the Brotherhood of Mount S. Agnes by his virtues for seventy-one years, Thomas à Kempis died in the ninety-first year of his age, on the 25th of July, 1471.

Confiteantur Tibi, Domine, omnia opera Tua : et
Sancti Tui benedicant Tibi.

Gloriam Regni Tui dicent : et potentiam Tuam
loquentur.

Ut notam faciant filiis hominum potentiam Tuam :
et gloriam magnificentiæ Regni Tui.

Ps. cxlv. 10, 11, 12.

Select Homilies for Holydays and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. I.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. CÆSARIUS OF ARLES, AND S. BERNARD;

FOR ADVENT.

I.

Homily of S. Cæsarius.

(1st for Advent.)

[S. Cæsarius, Archbishop and Confessor, the probable author of this and the following Homily, was born A.D. 470, raised to the archiepiscopal see of Arles A.D. 501, died on the eve of S. Austin, Aug. 27, 542. These Homilies are published by the Benedictine editors in an appendix to the sermons of S. Austin, to whom, as well as to S. Ambrose, many of the sermons of S. Cæsarius have been attributed.]

ON OUR LORD'S ADVENT.

NOW that the most sacred and solemn day is approaching, when our Saviour was pleased of His mercy to be born among men, consider diligently, beloved brethren, in what manner it befits us to be prepared on the Advent of so great a Power; that so, joyous and glad of heart, we may be accounted worthy to receive our Lord with honour and praise; and in His sight to rejoice with thankfulness, amidst the blessed companies of the Saints, rather than by Him to be cast off in punishment of our vileness, and to deserve, with the sinners, everlasting confusion. Wherefore, I entreat and admonish, that with the help of God we labour all we can, that so on that day we may be able with a conscience void of offence, a clean heart, and a chaste body, to draw near the Altar of the Lord, and deserve to receive His Body and Blood,

The Nativity
how to be ap-
proached.

Requirements
towards a due
participation
of the holy
Eucharist at
Christmas.

not to condemnation, but to our soul's health. For in the Body of Christ standeth our life; even as Himself also has said, *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.*¹ Let him, then, change his life who desires to receive Life. For except he change his life, he will receive Life to condemnation; and be rather corrupted by It than healed, rather killed than made alive. For so said the Apostle, *Whosoever shall eat the Body of the Lord, and drink His Blood unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation* to himself.²

The conscience to be cleansed.

2. And although it befits us at all times to be adorned and resplendent with good works, most chiefly on the day of our Lord's Nativity ought your works (as Himself also says in the Gospel) *to shine before men.*³ Consider, I entreat you, brethren, when any man in power or of noble birth desires to celebrate his own birth-day, or that of a son, how diligently for many days before he looks to what is filthy in his dwelling, and orders to be cleansed whatever he sees filthy in his house; bids what is trifling and unbecoming be cast away, and what is useful and necessary set forth; the house, too, if it be dingy, is white-washed; the floors are swept with brooms, and strewn and adorned with various flowers; and whatever serves to gladness of mind and comfort of body is provided with all care. And why all this, beloved brethren, but to celebrate with joy the birth-day of some perishable mortal? If, then, you make such preparations on your own birth-day, or that of a son, O how many, and of what kind, should be your preparations for the Birth-day of your Lord? If you prepare this for a mortal, what ought you to prepare for the Eternal? Whatever, then, you would be unwilling to find, so far as you can help it, in your dwelling-house, strive that God find not in your soul.

The soul to be adorned with good works.

3. Were some earthly king or master of a family to invite you to his birth-day feast, with what garments would you study to go adorned—how new and clean; nay, how gorgeous—that so neither their oldness, nor their homeliness, nor any thing filthy about them

¹ S. John vi. 53.

² 1 Cor. xi. 29.

³ S. Matt. v. 16.

Advent.

might offend the eyes of your host! With a like eagerness strive to the utmost of your power, with the help of Christ, to come with a clear conscience to the solemn feast of the Eternal King; to the Birth-day, that is, of your Lord and Saviour; your soul complete in all the attire of holiness, adorned with the jewels of simplicity and the flowers of sobriety, clean in chastity, glorious in charity, in the white robe of alms. For Christ the Lord, perceiving that you are thus prepared for the celebration of His birth-day, will condescend Himself, in His own Person, to come to you, and not only to visit your souls, but to rest there and dwell there for ever. As it is written, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them*;¹ and again, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me*.² O how happy is that soul which seeks, with God's help, so to order its life, that it may deserve to receive Christ as a guest and in-dweller! And, on the contrary, how miserable that conscience, and to be mourned over with a flood of tears, which by evil works has so mangled itself, that so far from Christ resting in it, the devil begins to rule there! Such a soul as this, unless the salve of penance soon come to its aid, is forsaken of the light, and possessed of darkness; it is emptied of sweetness, and filled with bitterness, a prey to death, and by life rejected. Let not him who is such an one mistrust the Lord's favour, and be cast down by despair that "worketh death;" but rather let him quick betake himself to penance, and while the wounds of his sins are still fresh and warm, make application of healing remedies. For our Physician is Almighty God, and so is He wont to cure our wounds, that, after His remedies, not even the trace of a scar remains. Therefore ought ye, for many days before His Nativity, to abstain even from all defilement.³

Sin should be straightway followed by penance.

4. As often, then, as you lay yourselves out to celebrate either the Lord's Nativity, or any other solemnity of the Church, before all things flee drunkenness, withstand anger, as if it were some raging beast; drive out of your hearts all hatred, as ye would some deadly poison; and

What sins to be shunned.

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

² Rev. iii. 20.

³ *i. e.* not merely from sin.

let there be among you such love as reaches not to your friends only, but to your very enemies; that so you may say, in the Lord's Prayer, with a safe conscience, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* For I know not how a man can come clear to the Lord's Altar, who is conscious of owing a grudge to any single person; more especially when S. John Evangelist exclaims, in fearful words, *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.*¹ And I leave it to you to judge, whether a murderer, before he has done penance, should venture upon receiving the Eucharist. Holy John, too, cries aloud, saying, *He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.*² And again, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*³ Whoever, then, cherishes hatred or anger in his heart, and by thunders like these is neither frightened nor awakened, is to be accounted not asleep, but dead.

These things, then, beloved brethren, consider day by day; and let those who are good strive, with the grace of God, to go on in good works; since it is not he who has begun, but he who has gone on, even to the end, that will be saved. But let those who are conscious of being slow in alms-giving, and quick to anger, and prone to excess, hasten, with the help of the Lord, to deliver themselves from evil; that so they may have grace to fulfil what is good; that when the Day of Judgment shall come, they may not be found among the unholy, but deserve to attain, with the just and merciful, to everlasting rewards, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth for ever. Amen.

¹ 1 S. John iii. 15.² 1 S. John ii. 11.³ Ib. iv. 20.

Advent.

II.

Homily of S. Caesarius.*[2d for Advent.]*

ON OUR LORD'S ADVENT.

NOW, beloved brethren, that we are about, with the devotion of faithful hearts, to enter upon the holy and amiable, the glorious and most excellent Solemnity of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour, we should prepare ourselves, with all our strength, through His assistance, and look carefully into all the hiding-places of our souls, lest any sin lie hid within us, to confound and prey upon our conscience, and offend the eyes of Divine Majesty. For though Christ our Lord, after His Passion, rose again, and has ascended into heaven, He yet, as we believe, considers, and well observes, how each of His servants, without covetousness, without anger, without pride and wantonness, seeks to order and prepare himself to celebrate His Nativity; and accordingly as He sees each adorned with good works, so will He bestow on him His merciful favour. For if He see any one clothed with the light of charity, ornamented with the pearls of justice or mercy, chaste, humble, pitiful, kind, and sober, wherever He recognises such an one, to him He will dispense, by the ministry of His Priests, His Body and Blood, not to condemnation, but for healing. Whereas, if He see any one an adulterer, a drunkard, covetous and proud, I am afraid there will be said to him what the Lord Himself has said in the Gospel, *Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding-garment?*¹ And (which God avert!) that what follows will come upon him, *Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*² O, what a sentence will he receive in the Day of Judgment, who, without the medicine of penance, comes to the Feast of the Lord, defiled by the stains of vice!

2. For, on the Lord's Birth-day, beloved brethren, Christ was joined, as it were, in spiritual espousals, to His Bride, the Church. Then, *Truth flourished*

Duty of preparing for Christ.

Nuptial day of Christ.

¹ S. Matthew xxii. 12.

² Ib. ver. 13.

Advent.

*out of the earth, and Righteousness looked down from heaven.*¹ Then, *the Bridegroom came forth out of his chamber;*² that is, the Word of God out of the womb of the Virgin. He came forth with His Spouse, the Church; that is, He took on Himself human flesh. Now, then, that we are invited to those so holy nuptials, and are to be received at the banquet of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, consider in what garments we ought to be clothed. And therefore let us cleanse, as far as we can, with the help of God, both our hearts and bodies; that so that heavenly King, who invites us, may find nothing unclean in us, nothing loathsome, nothing dark, nothing unworthy of His eyes. These, then, are matters, beloved brethren, which we should consider not cursorily, but with great fear. For we have been invited to a Marriage, at which ourselves, if we act well, shall be brides. Let us reflect, then, to what a Marriage, let us ponder well to what a Spouse, or to what a banquet, we have been invited. Invited have we been to a Table, where not the food of man is found, but the Bread of Angels is set before us. And, therefore, let us see that in the soul within, where we ought to be adorned with the pearls of good works, we appear not wrapped up in the tattered rags of vices; and when chastity shall bring out, in the sight of God, the glorious whiteness of those that are good, lasciviousness then exhibit the foul stains of the wicked.

Preparation
for Christian
solemnities.

3. Accordingly, when either our Lord's Nativity, or any other Festival draws on (as I have often warned you), not only abstain many days before from the wretched company of harlots, but avail not yourselves even of the rights of marriage; keep yourselves at a distance from every kind of anger; let past sins be redeemed³ by alms-giving and penance; harbour no ill will in your heart against any man; what folly used to waste in gluttony, let justice begin to spend, in mercy, on the poor; what lust or gluttony has squandered in the world, let piety replace in heaven.

Hospitality
towards the
poor.

4. And although it be true that we ought to give alms at all times, especially on the holy solemnities should we distribute, according to our means, more abundantly

¹ Ps. lxxxv. 11.

² Ib. xix. 5.

³ redimantur.

Advent.

dantly; and above all things invite the poor in greater numbers to our feasts. For it is not right, that on a holy solemnity among a Christian people belonging to one Lord, some should be drunken, and some tormented with the pangs of extreme hunger. And we and all Christian people are the servants of one Lord; have been bought with one price; entered this world in the same condition; shall have to quit it with the same end; and, if we do well, shall come, one and all, to the same blessedness. And why should not a poor man take his meals with you, when he is to receive the same kingdom with you? Why should not a poor man receive so much as a cast-off garment, when he is with you to be clothed in the robe of immortality? Why is not a poor man fit to receive your bread, when he was fit to receive with you the Sacrament of Baptism? Why is he unworthy to partake of the leavings of your food, when he is to come with you to the feast of Angels? Hear, brethren, hear, I entreat you, not my words, but our Lord's common commandment. For so says He in the Gospel: *When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*¹

5. But I hear some one say, Then I ought not to ask my friends or relatives to dinner? Yes; relatives and neighbours are to be invited, but less often. And even handsome entertainments given to them should not be prepared too expensively and delicately, but be so sparing and moderate, that something may remain, out of which the poor may be relieved—something to be spent on the needy; that so, when the Day of Judgment comes, we may not, with the unholy, who now despise the poor, hear the words, *Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*;² but with the just and merciful may deserve to hear, *Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from*

Friends to be entertained but rarely and discreetly.

¹ S. Luke xiv. 12-14.

² S. Matt. xxv. 41, 42.

Advent.

the foundation of the world : for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink ;¹ and at the same time that welcome Voice be directed towards us, Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.²

Recapitulation.

6. But in order that what we have now suggested may take firmer hold of the minds of Your Charity, we will shortly repeat what has been said. This, then, brethren, is the substance of our admonitions ; that, inasmuch as the Nativity of the Lord is at hand, we prepare ourselves, by the help of Christ, as for a heavenly Marriage-feast, pure from all wantonness, and adorned with good works ; bestow alms on the poor, cast off from our hearts anger or hatred, as it were poison of the devil. Be faithful in keeping chastity even as regards your own wives ; invite the poor in greater numbers to your table ; rise earlier for vigils ; stand in the church praying or singing psalms ; do not allow any idle or secular words to fall from your lips ; and those who will utter them rebuke. Keep peace with all ; and those whom you know to disagree, recall to harmony. These things, if you resolve, with the help of Christ, faithfully to fulfil, you may both in this world draw near, with a safe conscience, to the Altar of the Lord ; and, in the world to come, happily attain to blessedness without end ; by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 34, 35.

² Ib. ver. 21.

Advent.

III.

Homily of S. Bernard.*(7th for Advent.)*

[The following is the seventh of the Advent Homilies of S. Bernard. He was born A.D. 1091; founded the great Abbey of Clairvaux, of which he was Abbot, A.D. 1115; died August 20, A.D. 1153.]

ON THE THREEFOLD BENEFIT OF OUR LORD'S ADVENT.

WE do but what behoves, when we celebrate with devotion our Lord's Advent, seeing that Threefold
need of man, He not only came to us, but on our account, although He had no need of any goods of ours. Now the greatness of His dignity sets forth, in the strongest light, the depth of our poverty. For the danger of our sickness is not only exhibited by the costliness of the medicine, but the number of our maladies is made apparent by the multitude of the remedies. For why are there distinctions of graces, if there appear no diversity of needs? Now it is difficult within the compass of one sermon to search out all the wants which we suffer; but three at once occur to me, which are common to all, and these, moreover, of the chiefest. For there is not one to be found amongst us that is not obviously in want of counsel, and help, and protection. This triple wretchedness is indeed common to the whole human race; and how long soever we abide in this region of the shadow of death, in the weakness of the flesh, in this place of temptation, it is with this triple malady, if we consider attentively, that we are miserably oppressed. For we are both easily seduced, weak in working, and frail in resisting. If we aim at discerning betwixt good and bad, we are deceived; if we try to do good, we fail; if we attempt to resist evil, we are cast down and overcome.

2. Necessary, therefore, was the Advent of the Saviour; necessary to men so prepossessed the Presence of Christ. And would that He may so come, as, by the superabundance of His merit, to enlighten our darkness, dwelling in us by faith; and, abiding with us, to help our weakness; and, standing up for us, to protect and

Supplied by
Christ's
coming.

defend our frailty. For if He be in us, who shall then deceive us? If He be with us, what, for the rest, can we not perform in Him that strengtheneth us? If He be for us, who shall be against us? He is a faithful Counsellor, who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, in any thing. He is a strong Helper, who cannot tire; an efficient Patron, who shall both bruise Satan himself under our feet shortly, and break in pieces all his machinations. In truth, He is the Very Wisdom of God, ever ready to instruct the ignorant; the Very Power of God, to whom it is easy to refresh the failing, and save those that are in danger. To this so great Teacher, then, my brethren, let us run in every doubt; this so strong Helper let us invoke in every work; to this so faithful Defender let us commit our souls in every struggle; for for this very purpose came He into the world, that He might dwell amongst men, with men, for men, and both enlighten our darkness, lighten our labours, and ward off dangers.

** * The Numbers of this Series are published shortly before the Holy Day or Season to which they belong. No. II. will contain Homilies for the Nativity.*

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Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. II.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. BERNARD, S. LEO THE GREAT, AND
THOMAS À KEMPIS ;

FOR CHRISTMAS.

I.

Homily of S. Bernard.

(1st for the Vigil of Christmas.)

ON THE VIGIL OF OUR LORD'S NATIVITY.

[On the first words of the Martyrology, *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.*]

THE voice of gladness is gone forth in our land ; the voice of exultation and salvation in the tents of sinners. A good word is heard, a word of comfort, a saying full of joy, and worthy of all acceptance. Rejoice with praises, ye mountains, and all ye trees of the wood, clap your hands before the face of the Lord, for He is come. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, be astonished and give praise, O universe of creatures, but above all, thou, O man :—*Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.* Who so stony of heart, as not to have his soul melted at this word ? What sweeter message could be told ? What set forth more full of gladness ? When have such tidings ever been heard ? What hath the world received at any time like this ? *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.* O brief word of the diminished Word,¹ but full of heavenly balm !

The joyfulness of the Birth of Christ.

¹ O breve verbum, de Verbo abbreviato !

The desire travaileth, eager to diffuse more widely the abundance of honied sweetness, yet finding no words. Since such is the grace of this announcement, that if I change even a single iota of it, directly it begins to taste less sweet. *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.* O Birth of immaculate sanctity, honourable to the world, of men to be beloved for the greatness of the benefit conferred, unfathomable even by Angels for the depth of its sacred mystery, and admirable, withal, for the singular pre-eminence of its novelty, inasmuch as this is that Birth the like to which hath been never seen, nor after it shall be. O Birth alone without pain, alone unconscious of shame, unacquainted with pollution; not opening, but consecrating, the temple of a virgin womb! O Nativity beyond nature, but in behalf of nature; soaring above it by its miraculous excellence, but yet restoring it by its mysterious virtue! My brethren, who shall declare this generation? An Angel gives the message, the power of the Highest overshadows, the Spirit supervenes: a Virgin believes, a Virgin conceives by faith, a Virgin brings forth, and remains a Virgin: who does not wonder? The Son of the Highest is born, God of God, begotten before the worlds; the Word is born a child: who can even sufficiently wonder?

The wondrous character of the Birth of Christ.

2. Nor verily is this Nativity profitless, nor fruitless the dignity of its majesty. *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.* Ye that dwell in dust, awake and sing.¹ Lo! the Lord is come with salvation, He is come with ointments, He is come with glory. For Jesus is not come without salvation, nor Christ without unction, nor the Son of God without glory; for He verily is salvation, He is unction, He is glory; as it is written: *A wise son is the glory of his father.*² Happy the soul, that, tasting the fruit of salvation, is attracted and runs in the odour of His ointments, that she may see His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father. Breathe again, ye lost ones: Jesus is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Revive, ye sick: Christ is come to heal the contrite in heart with

¹ Vide Isaiah xxvi. 19.

² Cf. Prov. x. 1; xiii. 1, &c.

the unction of His pity. Leap for joy, all ye, whosoever ye be, that are coveting great things : the Son of God is come down to you, to make you heirs with Him of His kingdom. I therefore beseech Thee, heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed : save me, and I shall be saved : glorify me, and I shall be glorious. So, verily, shall my soul bless the Lord, and all that is within me *praise His holy name*, seeing that Thou *forgivest all my sins, healest all my infirmities, and satisfiest my mouth with good things*.¹ In these three respects, my most dearly beloved, is this that I hear sweet to my taste,—the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For why call we His Name Jesus, but because *He shall save His people from their sins*?² Or, why willed He to be called Christ, but that *the yoke shall be destroyed, because of the anointing*?³ Why was the Son of God made Man, but that He might make men sons of God? For who is there that resisteth His will? *It is Jesus that justifieth : who is he that condemneth*?⁴ It is Christ that healeth : who is he that woundeth? It is the Son of God that exalteth : who is he that debaseth?

3. Jesus, then, is born : let every man rejoice, whosoever he be, who, by his consciousness of sin, stood condemned to eternal damnation. For the pity⁵ of Jesus exceedeth the utmost magnitude, or amount, of his crimes. Christ is born : let him be glad, whoever he be, that was wont to be attacked by his old sins. For verily, before the face of Christ's anointing no malady of the soul whatever shall stand, albeit inveterate. The Son of God is born : let him exult, who is used to desire great things, for the Great Dispenser is come. Brethren, this is the Heir : devoutly let us receive Him, for so He will be our Inheritance. *For He that has given His own Son, how has He not with His Son also freely given us all things*?⁶ Let none be faithless, none be tardy ; we have a most sure witness : *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*.⁷ The only-begotten of God would have brethren, *that He might Himself be the first-born among many brethren*.⁸ And that this cowardice of

These the
ground of our
rejoicing.

¹ Vide Ps. ciii. 1, &c.

² S. Matt. i. 21 ; Luke i.

³ Isa. x. 27.

⁴ Vide Rom. viii. 33.

⁵ pietas.

⁶ Vide Rom. viii. 32.

⁷ S. John i. 14.

⁸ Vide Rom. viii. 29.

our human frailty might not hesitate, He first became the Brother of men; He became the Son of Man; He became Man. And if man deem this incredible, faith receives support from sight.

The dignity of
Bethlehem.

4. *Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem Judah.*

Mark the character of the place. Not in Jerusalem, the royal city; but in Bethlehem, which is the least among the thousands of Judah. O little Bethlehem, but now made great by the Lord! He hath made thee great, who in thee from great hath become little. Rejoice, Bethlehem, and through all thy streets be sung to-day alleluias of gladness. What city, hearing these things, envieth thee not that most precious stable, and the glory of that manger? For thy name is already famous throughout the world, and all generations call thee blessed. Glorious things are every where spoken of thee, thou city of God: every where is sung that *He was born in her, and the Most High hath established her*; ¹ every where, I repeat, is it reported, every where proclaimed, that *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is born in Bethlehem Judah.* Nor is

And of Judah.

that word that is added, *Judah*, insignificant, as we learn from the promises which were made concerning Judah to the fathers. *The sceptre, saith the Scriptures, shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.* ² For Salvation is of the Jews, but still Salvation to the ends of the earth. *Judah*, it is said, *thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies*; ³ and the rest, which we no where find fulfilled in Judah himself, but which we see completed in Christ. For He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, of whom it is also added: *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up.* ⁴ Christ is the great Spoiler, who, *before He shall have knowledge to cry My Father, and My Mother, . . . shall take away the spoil of Samaria.* ⁵ Christ is the great Spoiler, who, when *He ascended on high, led captivity captive*: ⁶ and yet hath carried off nothing, but rather hath *He given gifts to men.* These, then, and the other like prophecies which are

¹ Ps. lxxxvii. 5.

² Gen. xlix. 10.

³ Ib. ver. 8.

⁴ Ib. ver. 9.

⁵ Isa. viii. 4.

⁶ Ps. lxxviii. 18.

Vigil of Christmas.

fulfilled in Christ (for of Him also they were predicted), are brought to our remembrance by this that is said, *Bethlehem Judah*: making it altogether impossible to ask, whether *any good thing can come out of Bethlehem*.

5. And then, verily, in what concerns ourselves, we learn also this, with what reception He was willing to meet, who was willing to be born in Bethlehem. For, perchance there were who thought that noble palaces were to be sought out for Him, where the King of glory might be received with glory; but not for this came He from those royal thrones. *Length of days is in His right hand, and in His left hand riches and honour.*¹ Of all these things there was unfailing profusion in heaven, but poverty was not found there. Moreover, on earth this sort abounded in exceeding abundance, and man knew not its worth. Desirous, then, of this, the Son of God comes down, that He may take it to Himself, and make it precious to us also by His own estimation of it. Adorn thy bride-chamber, O Sion, but with humility, but with poverty. For in these rags He takes delight, and, Mary giving testimony, in these silken robes He is pleased to be wrapt. Sacrifice the abominations of the Egyptians to thy God.

Poverty the
choice of
Christ.

6. Consider, lastly, that *He is born in Bethlehem Judah*; and be solicitous how thou mayest be found a Bethlehem Judah; and straightway He disdains not to be received into thee. For Bethlehem signifies the house of bread,—Judah, confession. Thou, then, if thou fill thy soul with the food of the divine Word,—albeit with unworthy devotion, yet with all thou canst,—and faithfully receive that Bread which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world, the Body, that is, of the Lord Jesus; that so that new flesh of the Resurrection may refresh and sustain the old skin of the body, which, compacted by means of this cement, may be able to hold the new wine that is within; if, lastly, thou live by faith, and hast no need to sigh that thou hast forgotten *to eat thy Bread*,² thou art become a Bethlehem, manifestly worthy to receive the Lord, at least

We, there-
fore, must be
as Bethle-
hem.

¹ Prov. iii. 16.

² Ps. cii.

Vigil of Christmas.

if confession be not lacking. Wherefore let Judæa be thy sanctification; clothe thyself with confession and beauty—robe most pleasing to Christ in His servants. Lastly, the Apostle commends both these to thee in few words, saying, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*¹ Since righteousness is in the heart, bread is in the house. For righteousness is bread. And *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*² Let righteousness, then, be in your heart, even the righteousness which is of faith. For this alone hath honour with God. And in your mouth let there be confession unto salvation: and then at once fearlessly receive Him, who is born in Bethlehem Judah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

II.

Homily of S. Bernard.*(4th for the Nativity.)*

ON THE FINDING BY THE SHEPHERDS OF MARY, JOSEPH, AND
THE BABE LYING IN A MANGER.

This Festival
begins in the
night, and in
heaven.

ACKNOWLEDGE, dearly beloved brethren, the greatness of our present Solemnity, for which a day is too short, and earth's expanse too narrow. It is extended at once in time and place. It first takes up the night; it fills heaven before it reaches earth. For night was lighted up like day, when, at the hour of deepest darkness, a new light from heaven shone around the shepherds. And, that you may know in what place the joys of this Solemnity began to be celebrated; Angels were first conscious of the joy which is announced as to be *unto all people*; and immediately there is with them a multitude of the heavenly host, chanting the praises of God. Hence it

¹ Rom. x. 10.² S. Matt. v. 6.

Christmas.

is that this night is solemnly protracted beyond others, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual canticles; and on this Vigil, if ever, we are to believe without any kind of hesitation, that the quires of those princes of heaven prevent our psalmody, in the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.¹ But how many an altar shines to-day with jewelry and gold! how many walls every where are adorned with hangings! Think you the Angels will be attracted by these things, and turn away from men in rags? If so, why did they rather appear to the keepers of sheep,² than to the kings of the earth, than to the priests of the temple? And why, too, did the Saviour Himself, whose is alike the gold and silver,³ consecrate poverty in His own Person? Or, any how, why is this poverty so studiously named in the message of the Angel? For it is not, surely, without some special purpose of mystery that the Saviour is wrapped in bands of rags, and laid in a manger, since this is pointedly commended to us for a sign by the Angel. *This, he says, shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.*⁴ For a sign were set Thy ragged bands, Lord Jesu! howbeit for a sign which by many an one even to this day is spoken against. For many, indeed, are called, but not many chosen, and therefore not many signed.⁵ I, for one, acknowledge Jesus the High Priest, clothed with filthy garments during His contest with the devil.⁶ I speak to those who know the Scriptures, and are not unacquainted with the prophetic

Christ comes
in poverty,
and is first
preached to
the poor.

Poverty the
sign of Him.

¹ Vide Ps. lxxviii. 25.

² The pastoral spirits first
Approach Thee, Babe divine;
For they in lowly thoughts are nursed,
Meet for Thy lowly shrine.
Sooner than they should miss where
Thou dost dwell,
Angels from heaven will stoop to guide
Them to Thy cell.

Christian Year. Feast of the Nativity.

³ Vide Hag. ii. 8.

⁴ pannis. S. Luke ii. 12.

⁵ The Saint in this passage appears to be playing, as it were, upon the word *signum* in its various senses of sign, standard, and seal.

⁶ Vide Zech. iii. 1. Joshua and Jesus, it is hardly necessary to observe, are one and the same name.

Christmas.

vision of Zechariah. But when our Head was exalted above our enemies, from that time evidently He changed His garment, put on glorious apparel, and girded Himself with light as with a raiment: He gave us an Example, that we should do the same. For, in battle, a breastplate of iron is more serviceable than a stole of linen, albeit the former be onerous and the latter honourable. The time will come when the members too shall follow the Head, and the whole body then sing aloud with one spirit, and say, *Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*¹

The shepherds find more than the Angel announces.

2. *Ye shall find, he says, the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*² And after awhile, *They came*, says the Evangelist, *with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.*³

Why is it that humility alone seems to be commended by the Angel, yet not alone found by the shepherds? Perchance the Angel more specially commends humility, because, when the others fell by pride, himself had stood in humility; or, in any case, humility is therefore proclaimed from heaven, because this is in a manner the especial virtue to be exhibited to the Divine Majesty. And yet it could not be found by itself, because grace is always given to the humble. They found, then, Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in

The Babe is humility, Mary, continence, Joseph, justice.

a manger. For as humility is the feature most strongly marked in the Saviour's infancy, so, by the Virgin, continence, and by Joseph, that just man, whose praise is in the Gospel, justice, are not

unfitly represented. In truth, that continence is a debt to the body who is not aware? But justice is the virtue which gives to each his due; and this is necessary towards neighbours. Moreover, humility commends us to God's favour, makes us subject to God, and is well-pleasing to God in us; as saith the Blessed Virgin, *God hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.* And thus, whoso commits fornication sins against his own body; whoso is injurious, against his neighbour; whoso is exalted and puffed up, against God. The fornicator defiles himself; the injurious annoys his neighbour; the proud, as far as in him lies, dishonours God.

¹ Ps. xxx. 11.² S. Luke ii. 12.³ Ib. ver. 16.

Christmas.

My glory, saith the Lord, *will I not give to another*.¹ Saith the proud, I will take it to myself, albeit Thou give it not. For him delights not the angelic distribution, which gives glory to God, peace to men. He, then, is no worshipper of God, but is exalted against Him, manifestly profane and unbelieving. For what is piety except the worship of God? And who is a worshipper of God but he who willingly submits to Him, and as the eyes of servants wait upon the hands of their masters, so the eyes of his heart wait upon the Lord his God?

3. That in us, then, may always be found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger, let us They must be found in us. live soberly, justly, and godly in this world. For for this cause appeared the grace of God teaching us, and through this also will His glory appear. For so it runs: *The grace of God . . . hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God*.² There hath appeared in the Babe, grace for teaching; but *He shall be great*,³ as the Angel Gabriel spake concerning Him; and whom the Babe hath taught unto humility of heart and gentleness, He shall hereafter magnify and glorify, when He cometh, great and glorious, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is blessed for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ Is. xlii. 8.² Tit. ii. 11-13.³ S. Luke i. 32.

III.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

[S. Leo the Great was raised to the popedom on the death of Sixtus III. in 440. He reigned twenty-one years, and died in 461. November 10th was the day of his death; but his festival is kept on the 11th of April, the day of the translation of his relics.]

20th Sermon.

ON THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

SYNOPSIS.

1. None is unconcerned in the joy of the Lord's Nativity, which alone is without stain of sin.
2. Wondrous is the Dispensation of this Mystery.
3. Whoso will put on the New Man must throw off the old.

1. **O**UR Saviour, dearly beloved, was born to-day,—let us rejoice. For on the Birth-day of Life, sorrow can have no place. That day hath swallowed up the fear of death, and by the promise of eternity elevates our joy. No one is excluded from a participation in this gladness; and we have a common ground of rejoicing, in that our Lord, the destroyer of sin and death, finding no man free from guilt, hath come to work an universal redemption. Let the saint rejoice, for he approaches his reward; let the sinner be glad, for he is invited to forgiveness; let the Gentile take courage, for he is called to life. When the fulness of time appointed in the unsearchable depth of the Divine counsels had arrived, the Son of God took upon Him man's nature, that so it might be reconciled to its Creator; and the Devil, the author of death, vanquished by that which he had before conquered. And in the conflict thus undertaken on our behalf, a wonderful law of equality is observed; for our Lord encounters this most cruel foe, not in His own majesty, but in our humility. He opposes to him that very form, and that very nature, which, although free from all sin, participates in our mortality. No reference, then, to this birth, hath that which is written of all mankind. *No man is free from stain, not even the child whose life is one day old upon the earth.*¹ Thus no taint of fleshly lust, or of the law of

Fruits of the
Mystery of
the Incarna-
tion.

¹ Job xiv. 4, according to the Septuagint.

Christmas.

sin, passed over, or infected, this singular Nativity.

A royal Virgin, of the lineage of David, is selected to bear the sacred burden, and to conceive in her mind, before His conception in her womb, that Child who is both God and Man. To remove the fear with which, in her ignorance of the Divine counsels, she might be filled at effects so strange, she learns, by the visit of an Angel, what the Holy Spirit was to work within her; and she believes, that without detriment to virginity, she shall become the Mother of God. For why should any strangeness in the mode of her conception cause her to doubt, when she had the promise of being aided by the power of the Most High? Moreover, her faith is confirmed to her by the attestation of a preceding miracle; and to Elizabeth is vouchsafed the unlooked-for gift of offspring, to the intent that He who had enabled a barren woman to conceive, might be believed able to grant the same to a virgin also.

Mary conceived God in her mind before His conception in her womb.

2. Wherefore God, the Word of God, the Son of God, Who in the beginning was with God, by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was not any thing made, in order to deliver man from eternal death was Himself made Man; without diminution of His own majesty, He in such wise stooped to clothe Himself in our humility, that He both remained what He was before, and took upon Him that which He was not, thus uniting the very form of a servant to that form wherein He is equal to God the Father. Nay, by so close a bond hath He linked together the two natures, that the inferior might be glorified, but not absorbed; while the superior might receive it into itself, yet suffer no diminution. Both substances thus preserving their properties, and coalescing in one Person, humility is assumed by majesty, infirmity by power, mortality by immortality. To discharge the debt of mankind, an impassible nature is joined to one capable of suffering, and Very God and Very Man are united in one Lord, that by this means, as was required for our cure, one and the same Mediator between God and man might die as Man, and rise again as God. No taint of corruption, then, be sure, fell upon her virgin chastity by giving birth to Health; nay, rather by bringing to light the Truth was her virginity preserved.

The two natures of Christ.

Christmas.

And well did this birth, dearly beloved, beseem Christ, who is the Power of God and the Wisdom of God—a birth wherein as man He is our equal—as God our superior. Had He not been very God, He could not have brought Redemption; had He not been very man, He could not have set us an Example. Wherefore at the Lord's Birth the rejoicing angels sing *Glory to God in the highest*, and announce *peace on earth to men of good will*. For they behold the heavenly Jerusalem built up and formed from all nations of the earth. O how greatly ought human frailty to rejoice in this unspeakable work of Divine love, when it causes such rejoicing to the high estate of Angels!

The Chris-
tian's dignity
and duty.

3. Let us, therefore, dearly beloved, give thanks to God the Father by His Son, in the Holy Spirit; who, for His great love wherewith He loved us, hath had compassion on us, and hath quickened us, *who were dead in sins, together with Christ*; ¹ that in Him we might be a new creature and a new formation. Let us lay aside, therefore, the old man with his works, and having obtained a share in the birth of Christ, let us renounce the deeds of the flesh. Be mindful, O Christian, of thine own dignity; and having been made partaker of the Divine nature, return not, by living unworthily, to thy former low estate. Remember of what Head, of Whose body thou art member. Remember that thou art rescued from the power of darkness, and translated into the light and kingdom of God. By the Sacrament of Baptism thou hast been made the Temple of the Holy Ghost; beware of expelling from thee, by wicked acts, so great an Indweller, and thus subjecting thyself again to the bondage of Satan. Thy ransom is the Blood of Christ; and He who redeemed thee in mercy, will judge thee in truth; He who with the Father and the Holy Ghost reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ Eph. ii. 5.

IV.

Sermon of Thomas à Kempis.

(6th for the Nativity.)

[Thomas à Kempis, Canon Regular in the Convent of Mount S. Agnes, near Zwoll in Overysse, made his profession A.D. 1400; and died 1471, aged ninety-one. As he has never been formally canonized, his writings do not strictly fall within the designation of the present series; but the Editors have ventured to deviate from their general rule in the instance of one whose praise is in "all the Churches," and who, assuming him to be the author of the Imitation of Christ, has been instrumental, even if not himself publicly honoured as a Saint, in "making Saints."]

OF DEVOUTLY VISITING THE INFANT JESUS.

SAW ye Him whom my soul loveth?² To you I speak, ye holy Angels. Tell me of my JESUS what ye know. Where is the Child who is born unto us? Shew me Him whom my soul loveth. But if ye will not shew Him to me, tell me at least, by those whom ye have judged worthy. Shepherds, to you I speak,—tell me of my JESUS what ye know. Where is the Child who is born to us? What tidings were they which the Angel brought you? *Behold, I bring you tidings of great joy; . . . for unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.* And the sign which He gave you,—what was it? *Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.* And the song of the holy Angels? *Glory to God in the highest:* this was their song.³ And afterwards what did ye? Immediately we went, with haste and great joy even to Bethlehem, and found Jesus lying in the manger. O me! what is it I hear? what sweet and pleasant tidings! Now I have enough; I will go and see this Child ere I die. Nay, wait awhile; I will go with you,—one lodging shall contain us all. And ye, O Angels of God, flock all to the spot, and guide me straight to the manger of Christ. Open to me, Joseph and Mary; open the door of my Beloved, that I may enter His tabernacle, and adore His sacred footsteps. *All the kings of the earth desired*

¹ Butler's Lives of the Saints, Nov. 10.² Cant. iii. 3.³ The opening of this Homily appears to be an expansion of the Antiphon; Quem vidistis, pastores? dicite, annuntiate nobis, in terris quis apparuit? Natum vidimus, et chorus Angelorum collaudantes Dominum. Alleluia, alleluia.

Christmas.

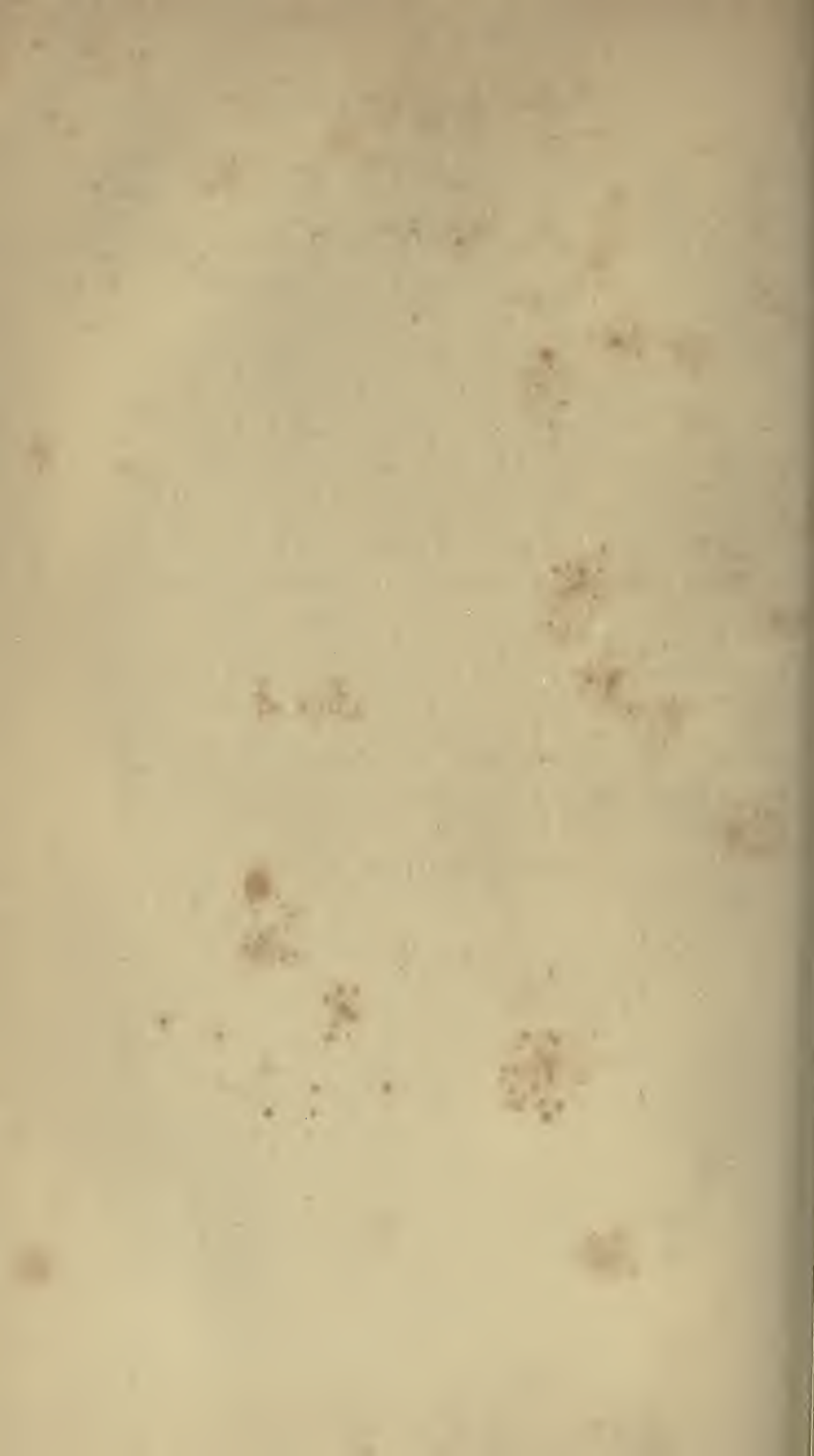
*to see the face of Solomon, and to hear his wisdom; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.*¹ Suffer me, then, to enter, that I may kiss His footstool. For this is He whom Prophets foretold, whom Angels announced, whom Shepherds visited with eager devotion. This is He whom I seek, whom I love, whom I long to see. Why art thou so fearful, O my soul? Cry, entreat, knock, till the door is opened to you. Enter the place of this wondrous tabernacle, up to the very house of God. Advance boldly, and join thyself to the Infant newly born, with all thy heart; for He will not reject thee; He will not bid thee fly; but will receive thee, though in silence, and manifest to thee His grace. Shrink not from His Presence, as He cries in the manger; it is thy sins He is mourning, no hardship of His own. He is come to seek, not to destroy thee. He is come to save, not to condemn thee. He is come to loose, not to bind thee. He is come to suffer ills, not to impose them. He is come to liberate, not to imprison thee. Why tremble at a poor little Child? He is God, you say; and in His hand is power and government. Even so. But He is come, not only to judge, but to absolve. He holds out pity, and keeps back vengeance. He offers grace, and defers wrath. He displays love, and forbids fear. He had much rather be loved than feared. Say, then, Thou art my Saviour and my Redeemer, O Lord, my God; Thou art welcome to-day. O Thou desirable and passing lovely Child, shew me Thy pity, who am not as yet fit to behold Thy glory! Extend me Thy hand, who have not strength to bear Thy righteousness! Of Thine infinite love, blot out all mine iniquity! I am weak and full of sores: O heal my soul! I am blind and naked: O illuminate my darkness, and adorn me with true virtues! I am withered and lame: O irrigate my face with Thy tears, and direct all my footsteps in Thy paths! To Thee my heart saith, My face seeketh Thee; Thy face, Lord Jesu, I long to behold; and with the Angels and Shepherds devoutly to visit Thee! For Thou art the Health of my countenance, and my God, verily to be loved by me above all things. None is

¹ Cf. S. Matt. xii. 42

Christmas.

fairer than Thou, none more amiable; none is nobler than Thou, none more holy. Thou art wise above all the wise; richer and mightier than all. *The heavens are Thine, and the earth is Thine, the sea and all that therein is; the day is Thine, and the night is Thine: Thou hast formed summer and spring, and appointed all things for certain seasons.*¹ And yet Thou wert pleased to be born in the darkness of the night, and the cold of winter. O wonderful and ineffable love of God, and of my Lord Jesus Christ! He whom Angels in heaven praise and adore is uttering in a manger the cries of infancy. O what great thanks am I bound to render to my most loving God, my Saviour and Redeemer, born for my salvation; who, lying in the stable with the brute beasts, disdains not an inn, faring like one of the poor. Verily, I have nothing worthy of praise; howbeit of a ready will freely I make offering to Thee, in token of affection and gratitude. What more? shall I sing with the holy Angels? or shall I lament out of compassion, when I bethink myself of the Infant's tears and cries? Either pleaseth me well; either were a pleasant task; whether with Jesus to weep, or Jesus with Angels to celebrate. And all this I desire to do to God's glory, and to humble myself in the eyes of His Majesty, who did humble Himself even to the form of a little child.

¹ Cf. Ps. lxxxix. 11; lxxiv. 16.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. III.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. AMBROSE, S. BERNARD, AND
VENERABLE BEDE ;

FOR THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION,
OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY.

I.

Exposition of S. Ambrose on the 20 Chapter of S. Luke.

[S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, A.D. 374. He died about midnight before Holy Saturday, April 4, A.D. 397, in the 57th year of his age. His Feast is kept December 7, the day of his consecration as bishop.]

Verse 8. *And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

SEE the beginnings of the rising Church. Christ is born, and shepherds begin to watch for the gathering of the flocks of the nations, who had before been living like stray sheep, into the Lord's fold; lest, in the overspreading darkness of night, they should meet with any attacks of spiritual beasts of prey. And well watch the shepherds who have the Good Shepherd for their Teacher. The flock, then, is the people, the night this world, the shepherds the Priests. Or perchance he even is the shepherd to whom the words were addressed: *Be watchful and strengthen*; ¹ seeing that the Lord has not only ordained Bishops, but has appointed Angels also for the guardianship of His flock.

Types of the
Church at the
birth of Christ.

¹ Rev. iii. 2.

Verse 9. *And, lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them.*

See what provision is made of God for the building up of faith! An Angel teaches Mary, an Angel Joseph, an Angel the shepherds. One embassy is not sufficient; for in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established.

Verse 13. *And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.*

Fitly is the company of Angels called a host, seeing that they followed the Leader of their warfare. For to whom should the Angels sing praise, but to their Lord, according as it is written, *Praise the Lord of heaven,¹ praise Him in the height. Praise Him all ye Angels of His?* The prophecy, therefore, is fulfilled. The Lord is praised from heaven, and seen in the earth. Of whom S. Mark says, that *He was with the wild beasts, and the Angels ministered unto Him;*² that in the one you may note a token of His mercy; in the other, a proof of His divine Power. It is of thee that He is exposed to the wild beasts; of Himself that He is proclaimed by Angels. And they say, verses 15, 16: *Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing³ which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste.*

Christ to be
sought with
speed,

You see how the shepherds hasten; for none seeks Christ with sloth. You see that the shepherds believed the Angels; and do you believe the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Angels, Prophets, and Apostles. See how pointedly Scripture weighs the force of every word. They hasten, it is said, to see the Word. For when the Lord's flesh is seen, the Word, which is the Son, is seen. Let not this instance of faith be lightly esteemed by you, nor despise the persons of the shepherds. Verily, the meaner for prudence, the more precious for faith. The Lord sought not schools filled with companies of the wise, but a simple people,

And simplicity.

unused to deck out and colour what they hear. For SIMPLICITY is what He seeks; in pride he takes no pleasure. Nor think you to despise the words of the Prophets, as of no account: even Mary gathers faith from the

¹ De cœlis. Ps. cxlviii.

² S. Mark i. 13.

³ hoc Verbum. Vulg: βῆμα. Gr.

The Circumcision.

shepherds: by shepherds is a people collected for the worship of God; for *they wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*

Verse 19. *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*

Let us mark in all things the chastity of the holy Virgin, who, modest in spirit as in outward carriage, laid up in her heart the materials of faith. If Mary learn from shepherds, how can you refuse to learn from Priests? If Mary is silent even before the preaching of Apostles, how is it that you desire rather to teach than to be taught, after the proclamation of Apostolic precepts? O learn that the fault is in yourself, not in your sex; for your sex is holy.¹ In fine, Mary gained nought from their teaching, she afforded them a model.

The Child, then, is circumcised. What child is this but He of whom it is said, *Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given?*² For He was made under the Law, that He might gain them that were under the Law. And He is presented in Jerusalem. Now what this Presentation to the Lord in Jerusalem was, I could explain, if I had not before done so in my commentary on Isaiah.³ He who has his vices cut off, is accounted worthy to be seen of the Lord, for *the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous.*⁴ You perceive that the old Law was in all its parts a type of that which was to come; for circumcision, too, signifies the purification of sins. But seeing that by a certain proneness and inclination to sin, the weak body and mind of man are inextricably involved in vice, by circumcision on the eighth day was prefigured the future purging away of all our guilt in the time of the resurrection. And this is the meaning of that saying: *For every man that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.*⁵ For by the words of the Law, the Offspring of the Virgin was promised. And He was truly holy, because spotless. Lastly, that it was He who had been signified by the Law, the words uttered by the Angel likewise declare: *That Holy*

The circum-
cision of
Christ.

A type of the
remission of
sins.

Available
through the
sanctity of
His birth.

¹ i. e. one sex as holy as the other.

³ This commentary is unhappily lost.

⁵ Vid. Exod. xiii. 2.

² Isaiah ix. 6.

⁴ Ps. xxxiv. 16.

The Circumcision.

*Thing, he saith, which shall be born, shall be called the Son of God.*¹

II.

Homily of S. Bernard.

(5th for the Nativity.)

*On the words of the Apostle; "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation."*²

God to be
blessed for
the gift of
His Son.

YEA, blessed; in that, of His great love, with which He loved us, He hath sent His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased, by whom, having been reconciled, we may have peace with Him, He being in us at once the Mediator of this reconciliation, and the Hostage. We have nothing to fear, beloved brethren, under so holy a Mediator, nothing to doubt of so faithful a Hostage. But what kind of Mediator, you will say, is this, who is born in a stable, laid in a manger, wrapped in rags like any other, cries like any other; in short, is altogether like any other infant? Verily, He is a mighty Mediator even in all these things; One who seeks what makes for peace, not perfunctorily, but efficaciously. An Infant indeed He is, but the Infant WORD, whose very infancy is expressive. *Comfort ye, comfort ye, saith the Lord your God.*³ So speaks Emmanuel, God with us. So cries out the stable, the manger, the tears, the ragged bands. The stable cries out, that itself is made ready for the curing of the man who fell among the thieves; the manger, that food is supplied to the same man who had been likened to *the beasts that perish*;⁴ His tears cry out, and His rags, that the bleeding wounds of this same man are even now washed and cleansed. For Christ stood in need of none of these things; nothing of all this was for Himself, but rather all of it was for the elects' sake. *They will reverence My Son.*⁵ So spake the *Father of mercies*. Yea verily, Lord; they do reverence Him.

¹ S. Luke i. 35.² 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.³ Is. xl. 1.⁴ Ps. xlix. 20.⁵ S. Matt. xxi. 37.

The Circumcision.

But who? manifestly not the Jews, to whom, but the elect, for whom, He was sent.

2. Yes verily; we do reverence Him in the manger, on the Cross, in the Sepulchre. Devoutly do we receive Him, a tender Child for us; devoutly reverence Him bleeding for us, pale for us, buried for us. Devoutly do we adore with the Magians, devoutly embrace, with holy Simeon, the Saviour's infancy, receiving Thy mercy in the midst of Thy temple. For this is He of whom we read, *the Mercy of the Lord is from everlasting*. But what else is co-eternal with the Father, except the Son and Holy Ghost? And either of Them truly is not so much merciful as Very Mercy itself. However, the Father also is Mercy, and the whole Three are but One Mercy, as They are also One Essence, One Wisdom, One Godhead, One Majesty. But where God is called the *Father of Mercies*, who does not see that the Son is here designated, as if by His proper Name? And well is He called Father of Mercies, "whose property it is always to have mercy and to spare."

God is Very
Mercy.

3. But, may be, some one will say, How is it His property to have mercy, whose *judgments are the great deep*?¹ For it is not said, *All His paths are mercy only, but mercy and truth*.² He is not less just than He is merciful, whose justice and mercy are alike the theme of praise. True, doubtless, are the words, *He hath mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardeneth*.³ But that He hath mercy, this is His "property." For from Himself draweth He the substance and principle of mercy. For wherein He judgeth and condemneth, He is in a manner constrained by us; so that mercy and judgment are seen to proceed from His heart in very different ways. For, hear His own words: *Have I pleasure in the death of the wicked, saith the Lord, and not rather that he should be converted and live*?⁴ He is rightly, therefore, called *the Father*, not of judgments or of vengeance, but of *mercies*; not merely because He seems, as a Father, to have mercy rather than indignation, and as a Father to pity His children who fear Him;

God's mercy
is from Him-
self; His
judgments
from us.

¹ Ps. xxxvi. 6.

² Ps. xxv. 10.

³ Rom. ix. 18.

⁴ Cf. Ezek. xviii. 32.

but yet more, because He derives the cause and original of mercy from Himself, but of judgment and vengeance from us.

God's mercies and consolations are manifold.

4. But if for this reason He be Father of *mercy*, why Father of *mercies*? In the words of the Prophet, *God hath spoken once; and twice I have also heard this, that power belongeth unto God: also unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.*¹ But the Apostle commends to us, in One Word, that is, in the One Son, mercy also as twofold; when he speaks of the Father as Father, not of a single mercy, but of *mercies*, and as God, not of a single comfort, but of *all* comfort, *who comforteth us* not only in this or that, but *in all our tribulation*. The mercies of the Lord, as some one saith, are many; and that, namely, because *many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all*. The Son of God is one, the Word one; but our wretchedness is manifold, and requires not only great mercy, but a multitude of mercies. Perhaps, indeed, owing to the twofold substance of which man's nature consists, both being so miserable, man's misery may not unfitly be said to be twofold, although it be manifold in each. For the sorrows both of our hearts and of our bodies are multiplied; but from the distresses of both He delivers, who hath made the whole man sound. Since, then, that One and Only Son of God is already come for men's souls, to take away, namely, the sins of the world; and shall come the second time for their bodies, to raise them up, and liken them to the body of His glory, it will not perhaps seem unsuitable, wherein we bless the Father of mercies, to acknowledge this twofold mercy. For when He taketh upon Himself at once the body and the soul of human nature, not only once, *Comfort ye*, but, as we have also noticed above, *Comfort ye, comfort ye, saith the Lord your God*; in order, namely, that we may be assured that He will save both, who did not disdain to assume either.

5. But among whom, think ye? Manifestly among His people. For "He" shall now "save," not any whomsoever, but *His people from their sins*. And hereafter He will liken, not *every* body, but *the body of our humility to the body of His glory*. Lastly, He comforteth *His people*, namely, His lowly

¹ Ps. lxii. 11, 12.

The Circumcision.

people, whom He will save; for the looks of the proud He will abase. Would you know who are His people? *The poor committeth himself unto Thee,*¹ saith the man after God's own heart. And again, He Himself saith in the Gospel, *Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation!*² O that we, my beloved brethren, may ever desire to be found among the people, not to whom He saith *woe*, but whom the Lord their God comforteth. For what is there to comfort them who have received their consolation? Christ's infancy comforts not the tattlers, His tears comfort not the jesters, His rags comfort not them that walk in long robes, nor the manger and the stable them that love the chief seats in the synagogues. But these will be seen cheerfully perhaps to give up all such consolation to them that wait in silence for the Lord,—the mourners, the poor in rags. But let them hear that even the Angels themselves comfort no others. For it is to wakeful shepherds, keeping their vigils by night, that the joy of the new Light is announced; and to them the Saviour is said to be born. Upon the poor and needy, not upon you rich, who have received your consolation, and withal the woe of God, did the Day of Sanctification arise in the midst of the very watches of the night; and night was lighted up like day—nay, was changed into day; for the words of the Angel are, *This day is born unto you a Saviour; this day, not this night.* For the night was far spent, and now the Day was at hand; even the very Day of Day; the Salvation of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is God blessed above all. Amen.

¹ Ps. x. 14.² S. Luke vi. 24.

III.

Homily of Venerable Bede.

[S. Bede, commonly called the Venerable, is a Saint of our own country. He was born A.D. 672, and ordained deacon at the early age of nineteen, A.D. 691. He was taken from the Church below on Wednesday evening, May 26, A.D. 735, after the First Vespers of our Lord's Ascension. His Feast was anciently kept in England May 26 or 27, for which day it is appointed in our Calendar; more recently it has been kept Oct. 29.]

ON THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

S. LUKE ii. 21.—*And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called JESUS. And the rest.*

BEDE, PRESBYTER, ON THE ABOVE LESSON.

THE holy and solemn memorial of our present Feast the Evangelist includes in few words; but he has left it pregnant with no slight virtue of heavenly mystery. For, after having first recorded the Lord's Nativity, the joys of which the Angels forthwith extolled with worthy lauds; which the shepherds celebrated with devout attendance; which all who heard adored with wonder; and which we too, after our measure and to the best of our power, have, by the goodness of God, just solemnised with due accompaniments of masses and hymns;—the Evangelist proceeds: *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called JESUS, which was so named of the Angel before He was conceived in the womb.*¹ This, then, is the awful joy of our present festival; this the solemn incident of our holy day; this the adorable display of supernal clemency, which the Apostle recommends to the hearts of the faithful, where he says, *But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*² For by a wondrous dispensation of pity, God the Father vouchsafed, for the redemption of man, to send not Angel nor Archangel, but His only begotten Son. And since we cannot look upon Him in the form of God, He again provided, by a wondrous contrivance of love, that He should be presented to

¹ S. Luke ii. 21.² Gal. iv. 4.

The Circumcision.

mortal sight as Very Man, made of a Woman; that is, of the substance of His Mother's flesh, without earthly father; so that, remaining in His Divine Power and Essence in all respects as He was, He assumed the very true weakness of mortal nature, which before He had not. And to recommend to us, by a signal example, the virtue of obedience as necessary, God sent His Son into the world, made under the Law; not as though He were Himself in any way debtor to the Law, He who is our only Master, our only Lawgiver and Judge, but to succour, in His compassion, those who were unable to bear the burden of the Law, to which they were subjected; and by His bounty to rescue and bring back those who were under the Law, from the condition of slaves to the adoption of sons, which is by grace. He therefore submitted Himself, in the flesh, to the circumcision ordered by the Law, who, in the flesh, appeared wholly without spot of pollution; and He who came in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet not *in* sinful flesh, abhorred not the remedy by which sinful flesh used to be cleansed; even as the water of Baptism, in which He willed that the nations of the new Covenant of grace should be purified from the filth of their sins, Himself also sustained, not of necessity, but for example. For your Brotherhood should know that circumcision supplied, under the Law, the same benefit of healing cure, in respect of the wound of original sin, which baptism hath now been wont to supply, in these latter days of revealed grace;¹ except that as yet they had not received the power of entering through the door of the heavenly Kingdom, until He came and gave the benediction, as He had given the Law, that the God of gods might be seen in Sion; till then enjoying this only privilege, that, refreshed after death by blissful rest in Abraham's bosom, they awaited with joyful hope the coming in of peace from on high. For He who now, by His Gospel, in fearful, yet withal healing words, proclaims, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*,² Himself

¹ Vid. "Scripture Views of Holy Baptism," 2d edit. pp. 320-340, where the question of the connexion between Baptism and circumcision is discussed at length; and an account given of a change of view on the subject, dating from S. Austin, and apparently recognised in this passage.

² John iii. 5.

aforetime by the Law proclaimed, *The uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken My covenant*;¹ that is, because he hath already, in offending Adam, in whom all have sinned, broken that covenant of life which was given unto men in Paradise, he shall be cut off from the company of the Saints, unless aided by that saving remedy. Either purification, then, whether of circumcision under the Law, or of Baptism under the Gospel, has been given, in order to the removal of that first transgression. And that no age, as time went on, might lack some displays of Divine favour, they too who, from the beginning of the world up to the period when circumcision was given, or after the gift of circumcision, out of other nations pleased God, were careful to rescue their own souls, and those of others dear to them, from the bonds of primeval guilt, committing them to their Creator, whether by the offerings of victims, or by the mere power of faith—for *without faith it is impossible to please God*;² and as it is written in another place, *The just shall live by his faith*.³ But the Son of God, when He came in the flesh, seeing that He took from Adam the nature only of flesh, but no contagion of sin, and through his conception and birth of a Virgin, by the Power of the Holy Ghost, had no need of the gift of regenerating grace, yet vouchsafed to submit to both kinds of purification—circumcised by His parents on the eighth day after His Birth, and baptised by John in the thirtieth year of His age: nay, more; He who was Lord of the Temple abhorred not that a third sacrificial offering should be presented on His behalf. Which mystery, with God's blessing, your Charity shall hear recounted three-and-thirty days hence,⁴ and duly celebrate. To every kind, I say, both of legal and evangelical purification, did the Lord, who needed none, vouchsafe to submit Himself; teaching thereby that the ordinances of the Law, now on the point of being fulfilled, were, in their own time most salutary; and shewing that all the faithful alike must undergo the remedies of the approaching Gospel. But

¹ Gen. xvii. 14.² Heb. xi. 6.³ Hab. ii. 4.⁴ i. e. on the Feast of the Purification and Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

The Circumcision.

wherein, on the same day with His Circumcision, He received His Name, and was called JESUS, He acted in accordance with the ancient institution, which we believe to have been derived from the fact of the Patriarch Abraham,—who first received the rite of circumcision in testimony of his eminent faith, and of the Divine promise made to him,—having on the very day of his circumcision, with all his household, deserved, in common with his wife, to be blessed in the extension of his name. He who, up to that time, was called Abram (exalted father) being thenceforth called Abraham, or “father of many nations;” for, saith He, *a father of many nations have I made thee.*¹ Which most faithful promise is at this time so extensively fulfilled all over the world, that even we ourselves, who have been called from among the Gentiles to the devotion of that same faith, rejoice to acknowledge him our spiritual father; even as the Apostle also addresses us, *And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*² *And as for Sarai thy wife,* saith He, *thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah;*³ that is, not “my princess,” but Princess; to wit, plainly teaching, that he should call her who was made partner and companion of so great faith, not the princess in particular of his own household, but Princess absolutely of all right believing women, and understand her to be their parent. And accordingly the blessed Apostle Peter, inciting to the virtue of humility, chastity, and modesty the faithful women who were of the Gentiles, makes mention of the same, our mother Sarah, with becoming commendation: *Even as Sarah,* he says, *obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.*⁴ These things, brethren, we have been careful to suggest to your affection, that each of you may remember how you have yourselves, in receiving the faith of Christ, received the grace to be partakers, with the patriarchs, of that exalted Name; if, having obtained purification in Christ, you have the happiness to possess the name of healing Baptism, borrowed from the Name of Christ, strive to preserve this to the end unshaken and unimpaired, rejoicing that in yourselves is fulfilled that prophecy of Isaiah, *And He shall call His servants*

¹ Gen. xvii. 5.² Gal. iii. 29.³ Gen. xvii. 15.⁴ 1 Pet. iii. 6.

by another Name,¹ that is, by the Christian name by which now all Christ's servants delight to be distinguished. For neither is there any other Name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.² Accordingly, in the words following, the Prophet adds, *Wherein he who is blessed in the earth shall be blessed in the Lord. Amen.*³ He says elsewhere, too, on the same subject, addressing the Church which was to be multiplied out of the Gentiles, *The Gentiles shall see Thy righteousness, and all kings Thy glory; and Thou shalt be called by a new Name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name.*⁴ Now, for what reason the Child, who unto us is born, the Son who unto us is given,⁵ received the Name of JESUS (that is, Saviour), needs not to be made clear to any of us by explanation. Need rather is there of anxious and watchful effort, that we may be able, by participation in this same Name, to be saved. For we read in the message of the Angel, *For He shall save His people from their sins.*⁶ And we unhesitatingly believe and hope, that the Same who saves from sins, omits not also to save from the corruptions which they entail, and from death itself; according to the witness of the Psalmist, *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, Who healeth all thy diseases.*⁷ For all our iniquities shall be done away, and all our diseases wholly cured, when the glory of the Resurrection shall appear, and the *last enemy*, that is *death*,⁸ be destroyed. And this is our true and plenary circumcision, when, in the Day of Judgment, we shall be stripped at once of all the corruptions of soul and body, and then, the Judgment ended, enter into the court of the heavenly Kingdom, to behold for ever our Creator's Face, which is typified by little children at their circumcision being taken to the Temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, as an acceptable offering with the sacrifice of praise. For he enters the Temple of the Lord with gifts, purified by the true circumcision, who, when refined by the glory of the Resurrection from every blemish of mortality, enters upon the everlasting joys of the supernal city, with the fruits of good

¹ Isa. lxxv. 15.² Acts iv. 12.³ Cf. Isa. lxxv. 16.⁴ Isa. lxxii. 2.⁵ Isa. ix. 6.⁶ S. Matt. i. 21.⁷ Ps. ciii. 3.⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 26.

The Circumcision.

works, saying, *Thou hast loosed my bonds; I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving: I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's House; in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem.*¹ Which time of entrance into heaven, most earnestly to be longed for, is signified by that eighth day of circumcision. For there are six ages of this life marked out into most obvious periods, in which we are to devote ourselves to labour in God's service, and work while there is time, with the view of obtaining eternal rest. The seventh age is not in this, but in another life, for those who rest until the time of the resurrection of spirits. And the eighth age is the very day of the Resurrection, and is happy without end of time, when the true glory of the circumcision shall shine forth without impediment, and the corruptible body no longer *press down the soul; nor the earthly tabernacle weigh down the mind that museth upon many things;*² but the body which is now corruptible rejoins the soul, and the celestial Indwelling lifts on high the whole man absorbed in the Vision of his Creator. The blessedness of which eternal day the Prophet describes in the sequel of that Psalm, which we mentioned above; where he awakens his soul, and all the affections of the interior man, to bless the Lord, and to remember all His benefits, *Who redeemeth thy life, says he, from destruction, Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's.*³ And therefore necessary is it, beloved brethren, that we, who desire to arrive at the reward of this most beauteous renovation, the Circumcision of highest mystery, be careful, meanwhile, to submit to the remedies of that primitive circumcision and renewal which consists in the daily exercise of virtues. Let us *put off concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of our mind; and let us put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*⁴ Nor, when we learn that circumcision is for chastisement in a single member of the body, let us suppose that this suffices; but, as

¹ Ps. cxvi. 16.³ Ps. ciii. 4, 5.² Wisd. ix. 15.⁴ Eph. iv. 22.

the same Apostle elsewhere warns us, *Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*.¹ let us peruse the Acts of the Apostles; let us view the ever-blessed Protomartyr Stephen denouncing the Jews, his own and his Lord's persecutors, as in a voice of thunder, *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*.² So, if they are uncircumcised in heart and ears, who resist the Holy Ghost, then is there such a thing as circumcision of the heart and ears. And, if of the heart and ears, then, too, of all the affections of the exterior and interior man. For, *whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her*,³ or hath a proud look,⁴ his sight is uncircumcised. To such as these speaketh the Voice of Truth, *He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God*.⁵ Uncircumcised are they in ears; uncircumcised in tongue and hands, *whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood*,⁶ who speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts,⁷ and their right hand is full of gifts.⁸ Uncircumcised in taste, whom the Prophet rebukes in the words, *Woe unto you that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink*.⁹ Uncircumcised in smell and touch, who besmear themselves with ointment and variety of scents; who follow the harlot's embrace, and perfume their bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.¹⁰ Uncircumcised in walk, of whom the Psalmist declares, *Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known*.¹¹ But they who keep their heart with all diligence;¹² who turn away their eyes lest they behold vanity;¹³ who hedge their ears about with thorns,¹⁴ that they hear not the wicked tongue; who taste and see how sweet the Lord is, how blessed is the man who trusteth in Him;¹⁵ who take heed to their ways, that they offend not in their tongue;¹⁶ who, while their breath is in them, and the Spirit of God is in their nostrils, with their lips speak no wickedness, nor with their

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1.⁴ Prov. vi. 17.⁷ Ib. xxviii. 3.¹⁰ Prov. vii. 17.¹³ Ps. cxix. 37.¹⁶ Ib. xxxix. 1.² Acts vii. 51.⁵ S. John viii. 47.⁸ Ib. xxvi. 10.¹¹ Ps. xiv. 7.¹⁴ Ecclus. xxviii. 24.³ S. Matt. v. 28.⁶ Ps. cxliv. 8.⁹ Isaiah v. 22.¹² Prov. iv. 23.¹⁵ Ps. xxxiv. 8.

The Circumcision.

*tongue utter deceit;*¹ *who lift up their heads unto the commandments of God which they love;*² *who refrain their feet from every evil way, that they may keep the word of God;*³—these shew that they have all their senses circumcised with the stone of spiritual discipline. For it was with knives cut from the rock, as we read, that circumcision was performed;⁴ but *that Rock was Christ*; by faith in Whom, by hope, and charity, not in Baptism only, but in every action whatever, the devout hearts of good men are purified. Which very daily circumcision, that is, the continual cleansing of the heart, evermore keeps alive the celebration of the sacrament of the eighth day; and, as a type of the Lord's Resurrection (which was wrought on the eighth day, that is, after the seventh day of the week), still constantly sanctifies us; that, *like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life;*⁵ by the grace of God, who liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ Job xxvii. 3.² Ps. cxix. 48.³ Ib. cxix. 101.⁴ Josh. v. 2.⁵ Rom. vi. 4.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. IV.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. LEO THE GREAT AND S. BERNARD ;

FOR THE EPIPHANY.

I.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

(1st for Epiphany.)

ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD JESUS
CHRIST.

SYNOPSIS.

1. Christ, at His birth, would be known by all ; gives the sign of a star, and withal the gift to understand and inquire.
2. Herod rages, but without effect, against Christ. The Magians testify their faith by offerings.
3. Christ orders the malice of Herod for the Innocents' good. What virtues we are to imitate in the Infant God.

NOW that we have ended the celebration of the last holy day, on which inviolate Virginity gave birth to the Saviour of mankind, the venerable festival of Epiphany, dearly beloved, gives us perseverance in our joys, that so, in this sacramental series of kindred solemnities, the energy of rejoicing may not flag, nor the warmth of faith wax cold. For it concerns the salvation of all men, that the infancy of the Mediator between God and men was manifested, as at this time, to all the whole world, whilst as yet He was confined within the limits of one obscure town. For albeit He had chosen the Jewish people, and of that people one family,

of which to take upon Him the nature of all humanity, yet would He not that the first beams of His rising should be hid within the narrowness of His Mother's dwelling; but straightway by all would He be known, who deigned for all to be born. Therefore was it that to the three Magians there appeared in the region of the East a star of strange brightness, which, surpassing every other star in lustre and beauty, might readily turn towards itself the eyes and minds of all; that what was of so unwonted an appearance might at once be perceived to be no subject for idle gaze. He therefore who supplied the sign, gave likewise understanding to the beholders; and what He made them understand, He made them also seek; and to those who sought Him, presented Himself to be found.

The three
Magians;
where they
saw the star.

The work of
efficacious
grace in the
Magians.

2. The three sages follow the leading of the heavenly light, and with earnest contemplation accompanying the track of its guiding beams, they are led to the knowledge of truth by the illumination of grace, while they judged by human sense that the rising of the King, whereof that light was significant, should be sought in the royal city. Notwithstanding He who had taken upon Him the form of a servant, and had come not to judge but to be judged, preferred Bethlehem for His Nativity, Jerusalem for His Passion. But Herod, hearing that a King of the Jews was born, was under great alarm from jealousy of a successor; and with the design of compassing the death of the Author of our salvation, proffers a lying homage. O, how happy for him, would he but imitate the faith of the Magians, and turn to devotion what he is preparing for a treacherous end! O blind wickedness of infatuated jealousy, to suppose that the Divine counsel can be confounded by thy madness! The Lord of the world seeks no temporal kingdom, seeing He can bestow an eternal. Why endeavour to turn the immutable order of events, and to anticipate the crime of others? The death of Christ is not for thy time. First must the Gospel be founded, first the kingdom of God be preached, first healings be granted, first miracles be wrought. Why wilt thou make another's

Human sense
looks to find
a king in a
kingly palace.

The incommutable
order of events.

The Epiphany.

destined work thy crime? and, precluded from the accomplishment of thy wickedness, rush headlong into the guilt of the mere will? By this plotting thou profitest nothing, performest nothing. He who by His own will has been born, by the power of His own choice will die. The Magians, then, fulfil their desire, and by the guidance of the same star arrive at the Child, the Lord Jesus Christ. They adore the Word in flesh, Wisdom in infancy, Power in weakness, and the Lord of majesty in verity of man; and, in order that they may manifest the sacrament of their faith and knowledge, what in their hearts they believe, by their gifts they testify. Frankincense they offer to the God, myrrh to the Man, gold to the King; adoring with knowledge the divine and human nature in unity; for what was in substances distinct was not in Person divided.

Christ by His own will both is born and dies.

The offerings of the Magians.

3. But when the Magians had returned into their own country, and Jesus had been removed into Egypt in obedience to the Divine warning, the madness of Herod, thwarted in its designs, begins to wax furious. All the young children of Bethlehem he orders to be slaughtered; and, as not knowing which child to fear, he extends an indiscriminate cruelty against the age which is the object of his jealousy. But whom the wicked king plucks out of the world, Christ plants in Heaven; and on whom He has not yet bestowed the redemption of His Blood, He confers the dignity of martyrdom. Lift up then, dearly beloved, your faithful minds to the radiant grace of the eternal light, and adoring the sacraments of mercy thus bountifully bestowed on man's salvation, submit your wills to those things which have been wrought for you. Love the purity of chastity; for Christ is the Son of Virginity. *Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul,*¹ as the blessed Apostle, who is present with us, exhorts us, as we read, in those his own words. *In malice be ye children;*² for the Lord of Glory has conformed Himself to the infancy of mortal men. Follow after humility, which the Son of God has deigned to teach His disciples.³ Clothe

The martyred Innocents.

¹ 1 S. Pet. ii. 11.

² 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

³ S. Matt. xi. 29.

The Epiphany.

yourselves in the virtue of patience, wherein ye may possess your souls;¹ since He who is the Redemption of all is Himself the Strength of all. *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.*² Press on with constancy by the way of truth and life; nor be ye hindered by earthly things, for whom are prepared the heavenly; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth for ever and ever. Amen.

Christ at once
the Strength
and Redemp-
tion of all.

II.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

(2d for Epiphany.)

ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY.

SYNOPSIS.

1. Herod, by attempting to take Christ away from the world, announces His Birth into the world. Christ flying into Egypt prepares it for salvation.
2. Our great debt to God is shewn by the blindness of the Jews, who, in order to His crucifixion, acknowledged Him not.
3. Happier is childlike ignorance than the knowledge of the Jewish Priests. Christ by His Infancy hallows that of children.
4. The call of the Magians gave rise to our own. Every one ought to imitate their gifts, that we may co-operate with Christ in the work of our salvation.

REJOICE in the Lord, dearly beloved; and again I say, Rejoice; for but a little while after the celebration of Christ's Nativity, the Festival of His Epiphany hath dawned upon us; and Him, to whom, on the former day, the Virgin gave birth, on this the world hath acknowledged. For the Incarnate Word so regulated in the outset His susception of our nature, that the new-born Jesus was both manifested to His faithful, and hidden from His persecutors. Already had the heavens declared the glory of God, and the sound of truth had gone out into all lands; for the angelic host had appeared

¹ S. Luke xxi. 19.

² Col. iii. 2.

The Epiphany.

to the Shepherds to announce the Saviour's birth, and the guiding star had led the Wise Men to worship Him. And thus, from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the birth of the true King shot its gleams, in that through the Wise Men the kingdoms of the East might learn the truth of these things; and the Roman empire could not be ignorant of them. For even Herod, when in his cruelty he wished to stifle the rising of a King of whom he was jealous, unconsciously furthered this dispensation. For while, intent upon his savage purpose, he was pursuing, with an indiscriminate slaughter of infants, the Child to him unknown, the heaven-told birth of the Saviour became more widely declared; and that with the greater promptitude and eagerness, owing both to the novelty of the heavenly announcement, and the wickedness of the bloody persecutor. And thus was the Saviour transported into Egypt, that a people which had been given over to ancient errors might now, by a hidden grace, be called to salvation at its very door; so that, although they had not yet expelled superstition from their heart, they might nevertheless receive the Truth under their roof.

Christ, why
carried into
Egypt.

2. With good reason, therefore, dearly beloved, hath this day, hallowed as it is by the Epiphany of our Lord, been specially honoured throughout the world. And this its honour our hearts ought duly to cherish and maintain untarnished, that by this means we may reverently celebrate the order of events, not only by our belief, but by our intelligent knowledge. For the greatness of the debt of gratitude we owe to the Lord for the illumination of the Gentiles, is proved by the blindness of the Jews. For what could have been blinder, what further from the light, than were these Priests and Scribes of the Jews, who, on the inquiry of the Wise Men, and the question of Herod, *where Christ*, according to the testimony of Scripture,¹ *should be born*, gave the same answer, from the oracle of the prophet, which was pointed out by the star from heaven? Without their going to Jerusalem, this star could doubtless at once have guided the Wise Men, as afterwards it did, up to the cradle of the Child. But to confute the obsti-

¹ S. Matt. ii. 4.

The Epiphany.

Why the star
led the Wise
Men to Jeru-
salem.

nacy of the Jews, it behoved that not only by the leading of a star, but also by their own confession, the Nativity of our Saviour should be declared.

Now, then, the prophetic voice was penetrating even to the Gentiles, and instructing them; and Christ, foretold by the ancient oracles, the hearts of strangers began to recognise; while Jewish unbelief was professing truth with the lips, and cherishing a lie in the heart. For they refused to acknowledge Him with their eyes, whom they pointed out from the sacred books; in order that Him whom they would not adore in the lowly weakness of infancy, they might afterwards crucify, when He shone forth in the loftiness of His mighty acts.

3. How comes it, O Jews, that the skill which was in you was so unskilful; that your learning was so unlearned? When asked *where Christ should be born*, ye answer truly from memory what ye have read, *In Bethlehem of Juda*. For thus it is written by the prophet: *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel.*¹ The birth of this Governor has been announced by Angels to the shepherds, and by shepherds to you. The birth of this Governor has been announced to the distant nations of the East by the brightness of a newly risen star. And that there might be no doubt of the place where this King was born, your learning hath made clear what the star did not teach. Why will ye bar to yourselves that way which ye open to others? why do you, in your unbelief, leave that doubtful which by your answer is made manifest? The place of the Nativity ye declare from the testimony of Scripture; the attestation of heaven and earth leads you to acknowledge the presence of the event; and yet, when Herod's mind was bent to persecute, your senses were hardened to disbelieve. Happier, therefore, was the ignorance of the infants whom the persecutor slew, than your knowledge, whom in his fury he consulted. Ye would not receive His kingdom, though ye could tell the town of His birth; they could die for Him, though they could not as yet confess Him. Wherefore Christ, that no period of His life might pass without a miracle, silently

¹ S. Matt. ii. 4, 5; Micah v. 2.

The Epiphany.

exerted the power of the Word before He attained His speech, already, as it were, saying, *Suffer little children to come unto Me : for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*¹ And thus He crowned infants with a new kind of glory, and at His own Birth consecrated the opening life of little ones ; thus teaching us that no one is incapable of receiving the grace of Divine mysteries, seeing that even infancy was made fit for the glory of Martyrdom.

The infancy of children consecrated by the Infancy of Christ.

4. In the adoration of the Wise Men, then, dearly beloved, let us recognise the first-fruits of our calling and of our faith ; and with joyful hearts let us celebrate the dawn of our hopes of bliss. For from hence we began to enter upon our eternal inheritance ; from hence were opened to us the oracles of the Scriptures, that secretly spoke of Christ ; from hence that Truth, which the blind Jews could not receive, shed its light upon the Gentiles. Duly honoured by us, therefore, be that most sacred day, whereon the Author of our salvation was manifested ; Him whom the Wise Men worshipped an infant in the cradle, let us adore omnipotent in heaven. And as they, out of their treasures, offered to the Lord mystical kinds of gifts, so let us, out of our hearts, bring forth gifts worthy of God. For although He be Himself the Giver of all good, still He looks for the fruit of our diligence ; for it is not to the slothful, but to them who labour and are vigilant in God's service, that the kingdom of heaven offers itself ; that so we make His grace of none effect, may through His gifts merit His promises. We exhort you, therefore, dearly beloved, to abstain from every evil work, and to follow chastity and justice. For the children of light ought to cast off the works of darkness. Wherefore, shun hatred, cast off lying, bring down pride by humility, put away avarice, love bountifulness. For it behoves the members to be conformed to their Head, that so we may deserve to participate in the promise of bliss, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, God for ever and ever. Amen.

The kingdom of God promised to the diligent, not to the slothful.

we, if we

Our merit depends on the gifts of God.

¹ S. Matt. xix. 14.

III.

Homily of S. Bernard.¹*(3d for Epiphany.)**On the Gospel: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"*²

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Our Lord's
threefold
Manifesta-
tion.

2. **T**HIS day's solemnity has received its name from our Lord's "Manifestation"—for that is the meaning of the word Epiphany; and on this day we commemorate, according to the tradition of our fathers, not one, but a threefold Manifestation of Him. On this day our infant King, a few days after His Nativity, was by the guidance of a star manifested to the first-fruits of the Gentiles. On this day also, He who, according to His Divine nature, is One and the Same, and whose years do not fail, having lived in the flesh nearly thirty years, came to Jordan to be baptised; and though unnoticed in the crowd, became known by the attestation of God the Father. On this day, moreover, being invited with His disciples to a marriage-feast, when the wine fell short, He, by a wonderful exhibition of His power, changed water into wine.

But let it be our pleasure now more closely to contemplate that Manifestation of the Saviour which was made in His infancy; for it is the one most full of sweetness, and which is understood to be the more especial object of this day's commemoration.

Visit of the
Magians.

3. To-day, then, as we have heard in the Gospel lesson, the Magians came from the East to Jerusalem. From the East it well beseems those to come who announce to us the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and by their gladsome message light up the whole world, save only hapless Judea. She, hating the light, is blinded by the splendour of this new brightness, and her dim eyes are made more dim by the glittering rays of the eternal Sun. From

¹ The first section is not directly on the subject of the Homily, and is therefore omitted.

² S. Matt. ii. 2.

The Epiphany.

the East, then, came the Magians; and now let us listen to their words: *Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* How certain, and without hesitation, is their faith! They inquire not *whether* He is born, but they speak confidently, and ask without doubting, *where* is He that is born King of the Jews? At the name of King, king Herod was agitated by the fear of a rival. Nor is it surprising that

Malice of
Herod.

Herod should be troubled; but that God's city, Jerusalem, which means the vision of peace, should be troubled with him, who will not wonder? Behold, my brethren, what injury is caused by the guilt of men in power; how an impious ruler infects his subjects also with his impiety! Wretched, truly, is that city wherein Herod reigns; for it will doubtless participate in Herod's malice, and at the Birth of our Saviour will be affected by Herod's fears. I put my trust in the Lord, that such a one, even though he should appear among us (which God forbid), will at least not bear rule over us. For the desire to crush religion in its birth, and to dash down the little ones of Israel, is to be wicked as Herod, and cruel as Babylon. For he that resists and opposes the birth of that which appertains to salvation and religion, what doth he but attempt, with the Egyptians, to slay the little ones of the Jewish race; nay, doth he not with Herod even persecute the new-born Saviour?

But let us now continue the narration we have commenced. Should any man be conscious of such conduct, he will, I trust, take more diligent heed to himself for the future, and, that he may not meet with Herod's fate, will detest Herod's malice.

4. Now, when the Magians inquired for the King of the Jews, and Herod asked of the Scribes what was the place of the Lord's Birth, they tell him, according to the Prophet, the name of the city. And when the Magians had departed, and left the Jews, *lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them.*¹ Here we are given plainly to understand, that by asking human advice, they lost the Divine guidance; and by giving heed to the testimony of the world,

Faith of the
Magians.

¹ S. Matt. ii. 9.

The Epiphany.

they lost the sign from heaven. But on departing from Herod, they straightway *rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*¹ For the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him.² Whence is this, O ye strangers? for in Israel have we not found so great faith. Are ye, then, not offended by this mean abode in a stable, by this poor cradle in the manger? Does not the presence of the poor Mother, does not the Infant at the breast, scandalise you?

5. Furthermore, *when they had opened their treasures,* says the Evangelist, *they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*³ Had they offered gold only, they might perhaps have seemed to do so with a view to His Mother's poverty, to enable her to support her little Child. But now, by the joint offering of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, is doubtless intimated a kind of spiritual oblation. For among earthly riches gold seems to hold the chief place; and this, by His grace, we all devoutly offered to the Saviour, when, for His sake, we once for all renounced the goods of this world. And now it is needful that we, who have utterly rejected earthly things, should earnestly desire heavenly things. For this means we offer the odour of incense, whereby, as you read in the Revelations of blessed John, are signified the prayers of the Saints.⁴ So, too, the Prophet says in the Psalm, *Let my prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense.*⁵ Thus, too, in another place you read, that *the prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds.*⁶ The prayer, I say, not of every one, but of the humble. For *he that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination.*⁷

We must offer to Christ gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

6. Moreover, if thou wouldest be righteous, and not turn thine ear from the commandments of the Lord, fearing lest He turn His face from thy prayers, thou must not only despise the present world, but also chasten the flesh and bring it into subjec-

¹ S. Matt. ii. 10.

² ver. 11.

³ ver. 11.

[⁴ Rev. viii. 3.]

⁵ Ps. cxli. 2.

⁶ Eccclus. xxxv. 17.

⁷ Prov. xxviii. 9.

The Epiphany.

tion.¹ For He who said, *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple*;² and elsewhere, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come and follow Me*;³ the very Same saith in another place, *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me*;⁴ which the Apostle explains by saying, *They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*.⁵ Let our prayer, then, have these two wings,—contempt of the world, and mortification of the flesh; and doubtless it will reach heaven, and ascend as incense before the sight of God. For that sacrifice will be pleasing, and that offering of ours will be acceptable, in which, along with gold and frankincense, there shall be also myrrh; which, though it be bitter, is nevertheless of exceeding use, and preserves the body, which is dead because of sin, from sinking into decay, and so being corrupted. Let these things have been briefly said on the subject of our imitating the oblation of the Magians.

7. But since we have called this a Manifestation, What is manifested. it is worth while to inquire what is manifested. Truly, according to the words of the Apostle, *The kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man was manifested*.⁶ For, lo, we heard in the Gospel lesson, that *when the Wise Men were come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His Mother*.⁷ In that Infant Body, which the Mother cherished in her virgin bosom, what was manifested but the reality of the flesh which had been assumed? In the circumstance of the Child being found with His Mother, what is pointed out but Very Man and Very Son of Man? So, again, in the second Manifestation, see whether He be not openly declared the Son of God by the witness of His Father's Voice. For *the heaven was opened above Him, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him*;⁸ and the Voice of the Father was heard, saying, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.⁹ It is in truth from this alone

¹ servituti.² S. Luke xiv. 33.³ S. Matt. xix. 21.⁴ S. Luke ix. 23.⁵ Gal. v. 24.⁶ Tit. iii. 4.⁷ S. Matt. ii. 11.⁸ S. Luke iii. 21, 22.⁹ S. Matt. iii. 17.

sufficiently manifest; sufficiently evident, and beyond all doubt; since the Son of God must needs be God. For no one doubts that the sons of men are men, and that the progeny of animals are of the same kind with them. But that no room may remain for sacrilegious error, He who, in the first Manifestation, was declared Very Man and the Son of Man, and in the second, the Very Son of God notwithstanding; is at once proved by the third to be Very God, and the Author of nature, at whose bidding nature is changed. Let us, then, my dearly beloved, love Christ Jesus as being Man and our brother; let us honour Him as God the Son; let us adore Him as God. Securely let us believe in Him; securely trust ourselves, my brethren, to Him, who, in that He is Very God, and the Son of God, wanteth not the power, nor, in that He is Very Man as one of us, and the Son of Man, the will, to save us. For how should He refuse to hear our prayers, for whose sake He was made of like passion with ourselves?

What we are
to learn from
each Mani-
festation.

8. And now, if you desire to hear any thing upon these Manifestations tending to edification of life, observe this: that Christ first of all appears as a Child with a Virgin Mother, to teach that we are to seek above all things simplicity and shamefacedness. For simplicity is natural to children, and shamefacedness to virgins. And to every one of us at the beginning of our conversion, no virtue is more necessary than a lowly simplicity and a bashful gravity. Again, in the second Manifestation, the Saviour comes to the waters of Baptism, not to be purified, but rather to receive the Testimony of the Father. This represents the tears of devotion, by which, not indulgence towards sins, but the approbation of God the Father is sought by us; when the Spirit of the adoption of sons descends upon us, bearing *witness with our spirit that we are the children of God*; ¹ so that we seem to ourselves to hear the mellifluous voice from heaven, that verily God the Father is well pleased in us. Nor is the difference small between those tears of devotion, belonging to the age of manhood, and those, which an earlier age shed amid the cries of infancy,—the tears, namely, of penance and

¹ Vid. Rom. viii. 16.

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confession. But better far than either are those other tears, into which is infused the flavour of the wine.¹ For those tears, I should say, are verily changed into wine, which, through the impulse of fraternal sympathy, gush forth in the fervour of charity; in the cause of which, even while I speak, thou seemest to forget thyself in a kind of sober inebriation.²

¹ The different stages of the Christian life, having its climax in Charity, are here compared to the several Manifestations at the Nativity, at the Baptism, and in the Miracle of the Wine.

² pro quâ etiam ad horam tui ipsius immemor esse sobriâ quâdam inebrietate videris.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. V.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. AMBROSE, S. ANSELM, AND S. BERNARD ;

*FOR THE FEAST OF THE PURIFICATION AND
PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.*

I.

Exposition of S. Ambrose on the 2d Chapter of S. Luke.

Verse 25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel.*

TESTIMONY is borne to the Lord's Birth, not only by Angels and Prophets, by shepherds and His own parents, but likewise by elders and the just. Every age and either sex, and the wonderful course of events, all tend to strengthen the ground of our faith. A Virgin conceives, the barren bears, the dumb speaks, Elizabeth prophesies, the Magian adores, the babe unborn leaps for joy, the widow confesses, the just man is waiting. And well is he called just, who is in search not of his own, but of the people's blessing; who, while himself earnestly desiring to be released from the bonds of corporeal frailty, is waiting to see the Promise; for he knew that blessed are the eyes that see Him.

Verse 29. *Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.*

Behold this just man shut up, as it were, within the prison-house of this bodily mass, and wishing to be dissolved, that he may begin to be with Christ; for to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, is far better. But whoso would be "let depart," let him come to the Temple; to Jerusalem; let

him wait for the Lord's Christ; let him receive in his hands the Word of God; let him embrace Him, as it were, with the arms of his faith. Then shall he be dismissed, that he may not see death, who has seen Life.

You see the abundant grace which has been diffused by the Lord's Birth over all; and that the gift of prophecy is denied not to the just, but to the unbelieving. Behold, Simeon also prophesies that the Lord Jesus Christ is come for the fall and rising again of many; to discriminate between the several deserts of the just and the wicked, and, as a faithful and righteous Judge, to decree punishment or reward, according to the quality of our actions.

Verse 35. *Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also.* Neither the letter of Scripture nor the history of the Church teaches, that Mary departed this life by the passion of a violent bodily death; for, it is not the soul, but the body, which is transfixed with a material sword. And, therefore, what it points out is, that Mary's prudent heart was not unconscious of the heavenly mystery. *For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*¹ Since all the thoughts of the mind are naked and open to the Son of God, from whom the secrets of the conscience are not hid.

And thus Simeon prophesied; a Virgin had prophesied; she had prophesied that was joined in marriage; and a widow also was ready with her witness, as was meet, that no profession nor sex might be backward. And, therefore, Anna is introduced, as thus eminent at once for long service of widowhood and for virtues, that by consent of all she may be judged fit to have been the herald of the Birth of the common Redeemer. Her merits I do not think it necessary to recapitulate, since I have already enlarged upon them elsewhere, in my exhortations to widows; and I am now hastening towards another subject. I observe, however, that where she is said to have passed eighty-four years of widowhood, a special meaning is intended; for, seven periods of

¹ Heb. iv. 12.

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twelve, and two periods of forty,¹ seem to import a sacred number.

II.

Homily of S. Anselm.

[S. Anselm, Confessor, Archbishop of Canterbury, was born A.D. 1033. He entered upon the monastic life at Bec, A.D. 1060, and three years afterwards became Prior. He was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury A.D. 1093; and died at Canterbury April 21, A.D. 1109, on which day his Festival is kept. He was buried in his cathedral. By a decree of Clement XI. in 1720, he is honoured among the Doctors of the Church.]

ON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO S. LUKE.

Chap. ii. 22. *And when the days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; as it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. And the rest.*

LET us rejoice, as we celebrate this day's illustrious festival, in the benefits therein imparted to us from above. For neither did the Virgin, who was worthy to conceive of the Holy Ghost, nor the Son, whom she so brought forth, need any purification; but in their purification God hath prepared and prefigured ours, who, seeing how many are the stains with which we are infected, require in many ways to be purified. What is related, then, in the Gospel historically of the Lord, let us understand spiritually of ourselves; for if we be His members, or His Body, then is He Himself in us; and whatever is done in us, is fitly said to be done in Him. For the Body of Christ, which is the Church, is, in the language of the Apostle, called Christ; *as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.*² From which it plainly appears, that the whole body of the faithful, with their Head, are Christ;

¹ Every thoughtful student of Holy Scripture will have observed, that certain numbers, especially those of Seven, Twelve, and Forty, occur in the sacred books with a frequency, and in a connexion, plainly marking a mysterious significance. Instances will readily suggest themselves, or may easily be obtained. The Saints of all ages, as even the present specimens will shew, are by nothing more remarkably distinguished from ordinary writers, than by the depth and reach of their acquaintance with the Sacred Volume.

² 1 Cor. xii. 12.

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which may also be proved from many other places of Scripture. When, therefore, we speak of the Purification of Christ, let us refer it to that part of Him which is in want of purification; that is, to His Body. And so let that be referred mystically to the Body, or to some of its members, which we read to-day historically of the Head; that *when the days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.* For the days of the purification of the body of the faithful, or the Church,—

The days of
our purification
are daily
accomplished.

that is, of the Body of Christ,—are indeed accomplished daily, so long as each one of them is unceasingly occupied in being more and more perfectly purified and cleansed; but their accomplishment will never be complete until the end of time. Howbeit, to each one the end of time is the hour of his own death; and whoever at his death shall be found cleansed from all sins, *the days of his purification, according to the Law of Moses, are accomplished.* For during forty days, according to the Law, did

The meaning
of the forty
days of purification.

that purification continue; and the number forty signifies either the interval before the end of time, or the period of the life of each one of us. On the completion, then, of this space of forty days, shall be accomplished the days of purification, whether of the Church or of any individual among the just. For so speaks the Law: *If a woman have conceived seed, and borne a man child, then she shall be unclean seven days; according to the days of the separation for her infirmity shall she be unclean; and on the eighth day shall the child be circumcised. And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three-and-thirty days: she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.*¹ And who is this woman but the Church of the Elect, or the person of her preachers? For she verily has conceived seed, even the seed of the Word of God, and is become thereby the Mother of a man child; that is, through preaching, she gives spiritual birth to a strong and new people, even the people of the Elect. The forty days of her purification, which are here divided into periods of seven and three-and-thirty days, may, if explained

¹ Lev. xii. 2.

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according to this division, express doubly, by way of confirmation, the same meaning, which, taken together, they express once. For this Mother, with her child, is unclean for seven days; since Holy Church, or the person of her preachers, with her children in the faith, is not without some stain of sin, during the whole period of her present life, which is signified by the seven days. For she sees *another law in her members, warring against the law of her mind.*¹ And therefore she continues *unclean, according to the days of the separation for her infirmity*; because, as a woman that is unclean is separated from the assembly of the clean during the days of her uncleanness, so is she too separated from the assembly of the Angels during the days of her mortality. For a woman that is unclean is defiled, not by touching another's flesh, but by her own infirmity; and represents the soul which is stained, not by any outward act, but by the secret pollution of the thoughts. Thus is it with the Church of the Saints, or with any elect soul, so long as it lives in sinful flesh; for though it be pure from all defilement of deed, yet is it many ways defiled by sinful thought; and therefore is it judged unworthy as yet of the company of the blessed Angels. The eighth day, on which the child is circumcised, is the day of Baptism, on which every neophyte is cleansed from the stain of his first birth, and, on rising up from the laver, is made a partaker of Christ's Resurrection, which on the eighth day enlightened the world. And it is with reason that we refer the eighth day, on which the child is circumcised, not to the time of the outward resurrection of all men, but to the Resurrection of Christ, that is, to the Baptism of each one of us; for the infant did not, upon his circumcision, enter the sanctuary, until the accomplishment of the three-and-thirty days, just as each one of us, though he be baptised, yet cannot enter the temple of heavenly bliss until he have finished the course of his mortal life, which is represented by the three-and-thirty days. For this whole number is made up of threes, and signifies the period of faith. The mother then remains with her child after his circumcision for three-and-thirty days in the blood of her purifying, because Holy Mother Church, abiding with any of her elect children

¹ Rom. vii. 23.

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after his Baptism, so long as she walks by faith, and not by sight, cannot be wholly cleansed from the blood of her purifying, that is, from sin, from which she labours unceasingly to clear herself, and cannot do it completely whilst she still bears about with her the body of death. Wherefore says the Psalmist: *In Thy sight shall no man living be justified.*¹ And Solomon: *There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.*² And the disciple whom Jesus loved: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*³ It is plain, then, that none who live in sinful flesh can preserve themselves in spotless purity from sin. Wherefore it is still farther added concerning Mother Church, that *she shall touch no hallowed thing*; by which is meant that state of unsullied innocence which angels enjoy; *nor come into the sanctuary*, that is, of the heavenly country, *until the days of her purifying be fulfilled*, that is, until the time of her mortal life be accomplished, during which she is constantly purified, but cannot attain to perfect purification. So deep and so obstinate is the stain of pollution, with which the Unclean Spirit through Eve infected mankind, that it cannot be entirely cleansed away, until the end either of the present life or of time. But as through Eve came pollution, so through Mary is restored purification. But then only shall cleansing and purification be complete, when the just, in the resurrection, shall utter those words of triumph, *O death, where is thy agony? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin.*⁴ Such, then, is the way in which are fulfilled *the days of the purification* of the people of God, *according to the Law of Moses*. But when *the days of purification* shall have been thus fulfilled, they shall be brought by Angels to the Heavenly Jerusalem, to be presented to the Lord, to dwell there for evermore in His Presence. And this, too, shall have its accomplishment; *It is written in the Law of the Lord; every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord. For we know that the Law is spiritual,*⁵ and that it speaks spiritually, signifying a spiritual womb, and a spiritual man child. For, by this man child is signified the strong and new

¹ Ps. clxiii. 2.² Eccles. vii. 20.³ 1 S. John i. 8.⁴ Cf. Hos. xiii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 55.⁵ Rom. vii. 14.

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people of elect Christians, or each one of them. And since the Church, according to Isaiah, had long been barren;¹ by the birth of this people from her, their spiritual mother, was her womb opened; for thence had no one before in like manner been born. But by the word *every* is signified universality; which is here used, when it is said *every male*, because this people is universal, even the Church Catholic, and contains within itself all the elect. Opening, then, as we have said, the spiritual womb of the Church, it *shall be called holy to the Lord*; that is, it shall obtain the name and praise of holiness in the kingdom of heavenly bliss; that, being made equal in all holiness to the blessed Angels, it may adore eternally the glorious Presence of its Creator. And for this reason did Christ the Lord, and His most holy Mother, observe the purification of the Law; that He might so purify all those, who He foreknew should be His members, as to make them worthy to attain to this glory. For neither Himself, as we said above, nor His Virgin Mother, needed any purification, seeing that she had been already purified by the Holy Ghost from the very first; and, so pure was the flesh which He created for Himself in her womb, that by It He makes the flesh of His people pure, as are the Angels; yea, and so holy was the Soul which He there assumed, that by It He restores to the souls of all His people the holiness which abides in the Angels. But since He is Himself in His people, whatever is done in His people, as before observed, is said to be done in Himself, because they are His Body. And of this same Body is spoken what follows: *And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons*. For they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, as we have shewn at length; and to offer a sacrifice for Him according to that which is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves,—that is, the twin graces of His chastity, both of Body and Soul,—or two young pigeons, that is, the gentleness of His Flesh and of His Heart. For the turtle-dove is the most chaste of birds, and retains both in life and death a constant and indissoluble fidelity to her mate; while the pigeon is free from gall and

¹ Is. liv. 1.

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bitterness. So, then, the *pair of turtle-doves* represents the chastity of the interior and exterior man; and the *two young pigeons*, meekness; which makes itself known without, while cherished in the soul within. The Angels, therefore, *offer a sacrifice* according to the Law,—that is, *a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons*,—for the people of the Saints, or for any one of the Elect whom they present to God; when they plead before the Lord the merits of his chastity, both of body and soul, which he has kept inviolate; or of his meekness, both inward and outward, which he has jealously guarded. Now, chastity appears to belong rather to Confessors, meekness to Martyrs. And because every one of the Elect is counted in the rank either of Confessors or of Martyrs, therefore we recognise a meet sacrifice for the people of God in *a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons*.

All the Elect
either Con-
fessors or
Martyrs.

For *young pigeons*, rather than pigeons, are here used as the emblem of meekness; because they who preserve meekness as they ought are little and weak in their own eyes, and are ever attaining to fresh growth by the imitation of their elders. The entire company, therefore, of the Elect, at the completion of the general resurrection, shall the Angels carry with joy to the heavenly Jerusalem, with the oblation of their good works, to present them to the Lord; even as they have ceased not, since the Ascension of the Redeemer, to carry them singly whither they were journeying, when *the days of the purification* of each have been *accomplished*.

Verse 25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. By this same man is represented the holy people of the Jewish nation; who were waiting for a long time the Coming of the Redeemer, and hoped by Him to be freed from the miseries of this banishment. Whence, too, is his name Simeon, or hearer of sad tidings; because that faithful people had been wont to hear from the Scriptures the sad tidings of their expulsion from Paradise, and of their loss of eternal good;*

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and therefore, on this account, were they waiting for the *Consolation* that should come to them from on high. Another interpretation of Simeon is, hearing; because the people of the Jews were wont to *hear* God's commands, that so God might *hear* their prayers; for we are here speaking of none among them save the elect. For which reason, also, they are spoken of as a *man*, because they knew to make use of their reason towards the apprehension of divine mysteries, and for the discovery of an escape from this wretchedness. And this people *was in Jerusalem*, that is, in the city of the Great King, by which we are forbidden to swear;¹ in the City of God, which is the Church. For *Jerusalem* signifies both the kingdom of supernal blessedness (as we said above), and the Church of the just still sojourning here on earth. In this Jerusalem, therefore,—that is, amongst the number of the faithful,—had been for a long time the people of the Jews, when the Child was carried to the Temple; that is, at the commencement of the Apostles' preaching, when, the entrance to Heaven having been opened through Christ, the infant Christian people was carried thither by the Angels, in the person of its members who passed from this world. For that elect people of the Jews constantly persevered, until the first preaching of the gracious message of the New Testament by the new teachers through the world, and the entrance of many of the faithful by a blessed passage into their country of eternal happiness. *And the same man*, the mystical emblem of that holy people, *was just*; because that same people were God's servants, and rendered to Him what was His own. For justice gives to each his due; now human nature belongs of right to God, as the handmaid of His will; and therefore every man who is obedient to God is just. This people also *was devout*; because they were moved either by legal fear, or by the fear of charity, to devotion to God. They were also *waiting for the Consolation of Israel*, because, amidst the distresses of their present banishment, they anxiously anticipated the time when the Lord should vouchsafe to comfort His people by His Coming. For *the Holy Ghost was upon* them, because by the Law they could not have been justified, had not the secret

Justification
was not by
the Law.

¹ S. Matt. v. 35.

grace of the Holy Ghost justified them through the faith of Christ. *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ;* because they had been assured by heavenly inspiration, in answer to their sighs and prayers, that they should continue to live in faith, and not die the death of apostacy, until they had seen God present in the flesh, anointed of God above His fellows, who were to bear the evidence of their fellowship in their very names, and be called, after Him, Christians. *And he came by the Spirit into the Temple:* because whither all the just are to come in their bodies after their resurrection, thither this people frequently came in the spirit by contemplation and prophetic vision; entering, that is, into the sanctuary of God, and admitted to the knowledge of their last state.

Verse 27. *And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the Law, then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of Thy people Israel.*

The Child Jesus, according to what we said above, we are to understand as representing the infant people of the faithful; since the Church is His Body, and all the Saints are His members; and therefore what is related of the Head, we are here to understand of the Body or of the members. For, to the same purpose are His own words, which He shall hereafter utter, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.*¹ Therefore, let us now understand the expression, *the Child Jesus*, as if the words were, *the infant Christian people*. But who should *the parents* be, except the Angels? For themselves intimate that they have a kind of parental bond of spiritual relationship with us, where, in the Apocalypse, they call us their brethren, in these words; *The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*² These *parents*, then, bring in our Child, as said above, into the Temple of the Heavenly Sanctuary, either at the death of

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 40.² Rev. xii. 10.

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each, or at the resurrection of all. And this, *to do for Him after the custom of the Law*; because, by the appointment of the Law, after the accomplishment of the purification, they present this people to the Lord with the offerings of good works. Or by these *parents* may be understood the holy preachers; who, having received in Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, open it to the infant people of the faithful; and bring them into the Temple of the same Heavenly Kingdom, absolving and blessing them; and praying that, after their departure hence, they may be received therein. And this they do in fulfilment of the legal ordinance; for in this manner they bring them, by their prayers, into that sanctuary of blessedness, in order that, as the Law had decreed upon the final accomplishment of the days of *purification*, they may present them to the Lord with the offering of their good works. The Child who is brought into the Temple may also, in our interpretation, represent those who, coming to the Faith, are brought into the Church. For this mode of introduction the holy Fathers so arrange, as to observe the custom of the Law; for, after the accomplishment of purification in Baptism, they admit them to the holy Altar, to be consecrated by the Victim of the divine Eucharist. And thus, when, by the parents, that is to say, the Angels, or the preachers in the dawn of the Gospel, the infant people of the faithful was first brought, like a child, into the Temple of supernal holiness and blessedness, in the persons of those of its members who passed out of this world; or brought to the Church, in the persons of those who received the Faith,—*then took he Him up in his arms*; that is, this same devout people of the Jews embraced the Child with the arms of charity, as the Object of their closest affection. For the *embracing* represents charity; and the *arms*, energetic deeds; and therefore, to receive into the arms, is to embrace with the strength of affection. In this manner, then, took they them up *into* their *arms*,—that is, they bare them in their arms by earnest manifestations of exceeding charity,—and *blessed God*, who had presented to their sight the people of this new Covenant of grace, which poured, in unbroken stream, into the tabernacle of the Heavenly Kingdom; and said, *Now* (that is, since

Thou hast vouchsafed such grace,) *lettest Thou Thy servant, O Lord, depart in peace*; that is, settest Thou me free from the laborious prison-house of my present banishment; me, who was oppressed by the slavery of the Law; that I may now pass into the country of my heavenly Home in peace; since the Prince of death hath been chained by Christ's victory, *according to Thy word*, which Thou hadst spoken to me concerning the Coming of this grace. For, behold now, either in myself, or in my brethren, *mine eyes have seen, O Lord, Thy Salvation*; that is, Thy JESUS, who is, by interpretation, Salvation, or the Saviour; and who was sent by Thee to save the world. *Which Salvation, verily, Thou hast prepared before the face of all people*; that Thou mightest make the Saviour of the universe to be seen by the eyes of faith by *all people* who are in the world. Him, I say, Thou hast prepared *to be a Light to lighten the Gentiles*; that so, by the splendour of His brightness, that darkness may be dispelled, which veiled the hearts of the Gentiles, and shut them out from the illumination of divine knowledge; *and the Glory of Thy people Israel*, that so He might be the Glory of the believing Jewish people, which hath been ever Thine. For, great glory is it to the believing Jews, that of their race God should have taken flesh. Who hath enlightened the Gentiles also by faith in Himself, as Himself saith; *I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in darkness*.¹ Whence hath obtained the beauteous custom of the Church, whereby the faithful, on the present celebration, make offerings of wax-lights, or candles.² For, since Christ was offered to-day in the Temple, this they represent by their mystical offering; carrying, on this day, year by year, wax-lights to the House of God. For a wax-light, or candle, is emblematic of Christ. And, since every devout person who comes to this solemnity carries Christ, the true Light, in his breast, appropriately does he make offering of a wax-light. For, in a wax-light three things are offered; the wax, the wick, and the flame; the wax, wrought by the virgin bee, signifies the Flesh of Christ, which was born of

¹ S. John xii. 46.

² Hence in England the Feast of the Purification is called *Candlemas-day*.

The Purification.

the Virgin Mary; the wick, which is confined within it, signifies the Soul; the flame, which is above all, the Divinity. Nor can any thing be found in creation, which could serve as a fitter emblem of Christ. It exalts, again, the dignity of this our festival, that there has been transferred to it, as was meet, the glory of that famous procession, which in this month, called February (that is, the month of purification), the ancient Romans used to hold, every fifth year, for the lustration (that is, the making the circuit) of their city, and for the purification of it, as they supposed, from the sins which had been committed for the five years preceding. For, to “lustrate” signifies both to go round and to purify. Thus, our festival, too, is one of purification; and suitably, therefore, has this lustral procession been transferred to it, though conducted by us with a far different purpose from that of the heathens. And, therefore, the Gospel lesson, and the festival, and its season, express purification, that by all these things, we who need purification may deserve to be purified by the co-operating grace of Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, both from the beginning before the world was, and now, and henceforth for ever. Amen.

III.

*From a Homily of S. Bernard.**(3d for the Purification.)*

ON THE CHILD, MARY, AND JOSEPH.

WE celebrate to-day the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which was performed, in accordance with the Law of Moses, on the fortieth day after the Lord's Nativity. Think you her spirit could not have been moved to say, What need to me of purification? Why must I abstain from entering the Temple, whose chaste womb was made a Temple of the Holy Ghost? Why may not I enter the Temple, I who am Mother of the

Mary needs
not purification.

The Purification.

Lord of the Temple? In this Conception, in this Birth, there was nothing impure, nothing unlawful, nothing which needs to be cleansed; for truly that Offspring is the Source of purity, and came to effect purification from sin. What is there in me for the legal observance to purify, who am rendered most pure by the very fact of this immaculate Birth? Verily, O Blessed Virgin! verily, thou hast no occasion; thou standest not in any need of purification. But, then, did thy Son stand in need of circumcision? Be thou, then, among women as one of them; for thy Son also is thus reckoned among other children. He chose to be circumcised: will He not much rather choose to be offered? Offer thy Son, thou holy Virgin; present unto the Lord the blessed fruit of thy womb; offer, for the reconciliation of us all, the holy Victim, well pleasing to God. God the Father will by all means accept the new Oblation and most precious Victim, of which He saith, *This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

The two oblations, in the Temple, and on the Cross.

But that offering, brethren, appears somewhat of the tenderest, in which the Victim is only presented to the Lord, redeemed with birds, and straightway carried back. The time shall come when He shall not be offered in the Temple, nor received into the arms of Simeon, but without the city, in the arms of the Cross. The time shall come when He shall not be redeemed by the substitution of another, but shall redeem others with His own blood; because God the Father hath sent Him as a redemption for His own people. That will be the evening Sacrifice; this is the morning. This is the more pleasant; that the more complete. For the one is at the time of His Birth; the other when He is in the fulness of His age. Of both, however, you may hear what the Prophet has foretold: *He was offered because He willed it.*¹ For, in the present instance, He was offered, not because it was necessary for Him, nor because He was under the ordinance of the Law, but because Himself willed it; and, in like manner, He was offered on the Cross, not because He deserved to die, nor because the Jew had power to crucify Him, but because He willed it. Willingly

¹ Oblatus est quia Ipse voluit. Isa. liii. 7. *Vulg.*

The Purification.

I will sacrifice to Thee, O Lord, because willingly Thou wast offered for my salvation, not for any need of Thine.

But what, brethren, do we offer, or what do we render to Him, for all His benefits to us? He offered for us the costliest sacrifice He possessed; one, in truth, than which there could not be a costlier: let us, too, on our parts, do what we can, offering to Him the best that we have, yea, even what we are ourselves. He has offered Himself: who art thou that delayest to offer thyself? Who will grant me, that so great Majesty may vouchsafe to receive my offering? Two mites I have, O Lord—I mean my body and my soul; would that I were able to make a perfect offering of them to Thee for a sacrifice of praise! For it is good for me, and far more for my glory and advantage, that I should be given up as an offering to Thee, than be left to myself. For at myself my soul is troubled; but in Thee shall my spirit rejoice, if to Thee it be faithfully offered. My brethren, by the Jew dead sacrifices were offered to the Lord, when He was yet to die; but now, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*¹ The Lord wills not my death, and shall I not willingly offer to Him my life?—for this is an acceptable sacrifice, a sacrifice pleasing to God, a living sacrifice. But in that offering of the Lord, we read that there were three; and in our offering three things are in like manner required of the Lord. There was in that offering, Joseph, the husband of the Mother of the Lord, whose son He was reputed; there was likewise the Virgin Mother herself; and the Child Jesus, who was offered. Therefore let there be also in our offering, manly constancy; let there be continence of the flesh; and let there be a humble conscience. Let there be, I say, in the purpose of perseverance, a manly courage; let there be in continence, virginal chastity; let there be in conscience, simplicity and humility, as of children. Amen.

Christ offered
Himself for
us, we must
offer our-
selves to Him.

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. VI.

(Part I.)

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. ANSELM, S. BERNARD, AND
THOMAS À KEMPIS ;

FOR LENT.

I.

Homily of S. Anselm.

AN EXHORTATION TO THE CONTEMPT OF TEMPORAL THINGS,
AND THE DESIRE OF ETERNAL.

WHAT art thou doing, O man ? Why live in the world like the beasts that perish ? The Lord created thee to be wise and discreet ; do not make thyself like the creatures who are devoid of understanding ; keep watch, O wretched one ; take pity upon thyself ! Be wise. For thy sake the Most High God came down from Heaven to raise thee from earthly things to Heaven.

Thou art called, O man, to the Marriage of the Heavenly Bridegroom. Why slight the call, and shew thyself unworthy of it ? How wilt thou go in to the Marriage, tell me, with neither costly robe nor burning lamp ? Hate the world ; have God in thy thoughts. Abhor malice and sin ; and love thy kind Redeemer.

Keep guard on thyself while thou art on the earth ; as an Angel, have thy meditations continually chaste and holy. Be cured of all unholy thoughts, that thou mayest not be involved in the actions of the world. Rid thy mind wholly of the

miserably vain concerns of the present life, that thou mayest be crowned of Christ in Heaven. Be as a cloud, ready to pour forth a shower of tears, that thou mayest be able to put out the flames of sins.

Remember that tremendous Day; apply remedies to the wounds of thy soul. Walk courageously in the law of the Lord; by faith uncorrupt, and charity, see that thy progress be constantly secured. Grow daily by discipline in continence, having a certain hope of seeing the Lord in His brightness, and kingdom, and glory. Beware of an idle word; depart not from Christ's command. Sow a goodly crop in thy heart and in thy soul, even the virtues and the ways of the holy Fathers, and of Priests well pleasing to God.

Be mindful, miserable one, that thou walkest in the midst of the Devil's snares. Wake up, that thou fall not into the gulf of death. Do not suppose that thou wilt live long on the earth; nor therefore linger any more in thy evil deeds. Always implore Christ; that thy whole affection may fructify; that, like good ground, yea, like the best, thy life may be fruitful, and most acceptable to God.

Keep before thine eyes the day of thy departure; hasten to be found in that hour without sin, that in the day of thy call thy soul may mount up to God, borne aloft by the ministrations of Angels. Hold this world in abhorrence; love thy Redeemer with the entire affection of thy mind. Let not thy soul be negligent; nor seduced by the fatal sweetness and pleasantness of the Devil's snares; lest, full of sins, and overwhelmed with vast confusion, it tremble in that hour and dissolve with excess of fear.

Be thou, O infatuate, ever on thy guard; be thy vigils clear of all earthly pollution; seek to be delivered from all offences and thoughts of shame. Be thou provident, O fond man, and awake from the sleep of wickedness. If thou wouldest be heavenly, always abhor and despise earthly things. Copy the examples of the perfect, that thou mayest come to the paradise of delights, and the amiable home of the Saints.

Why hate thy life, O wretched one? What canst thou seek more precious than thy soul, O thou of little faith?

For Lent.

Come, make haste, before the door of penitence be closed. Gladden the heavenly host with thy conversion. The Physician is waiting to see thy tears. Come, do not fear. Shew thy wound, and offer the healing balm of tears and weepings. Lo, the door of penance is open. Hasten, before it shuts.

Let thy tears flow whilst there is time, lest in another world thou weep without profit. For here is pity, there judgment; here is pleasure, there torments; here laughter, but there weeping; here singing, but there eternal fire; here splendour of attire, there the gnawing of worms; here elation, there humiliation. Humble thyself, therefore, in this life, that thou be not condemned in outer darkness. Let not earthly delight, therefore, be thy pleasure here, lest there be bitter mourning there.

Who would not bewail, who would not weep for us? We hate life, and are in love with death. What more lofty, what more noble, than to discipline the mind, to bring the flesh into subjection, that it may obey the government of reason, follow counsel, strenuously execute the purpose and will of the mind? What pleasanter food than to do the will of God, by the virtue of the soul to overcome the assaults of the Devil?

Whoso would conquer himself must restrain anger; let him be enervated by no seductions. Let him neither be troubled by reverses, nor lifted up by success; let him not be carried about by the breath of changing circumstances as by the wind. Consider, dearly beloved, in thyself, whether is better, to mourn for sin with frequent prayers in this life, or in everlasting fire to shed unavailing tears?

Why languishes the virtue of thy mind in affection and regret of this transitory world? Lift up thy soul to the inestimable brightness of eternal bliss, which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, which God hath prepared for them that love Him*.¹ Keep continence in thy tongue, continence in thy look, in food, in dress, in thought, in laughter; that so thou mayest be shewn to be in all things the perfect athlete of God. Study above all things to have no enemy but the Devil.

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

What can the world profit thee, if entangled in its cares? What fruit wilt thou have in thy anxiety for costly raiment, but punishment without end? Why art thou puffed up with the swellings of pride? Who would not rather shake with fear, lament, and mourn, seeing that all our hidden things shall be made manifest in the sight of Angels and men? Why grieve by thy wicked deeds, O vain man, thy most loving Father, who designs to reckon thee in the number of His children?

*Keep thy tongue from evil, seek peace, and ensue it,*¹ lest the Lord be made wroth at thy evil deeds, and deliver thee over as a most wicked servant to perpetual punishment, if thou wilt not follow him to glory. As the soldier of the Eternal King, renounce thine own will. Be content with every kind of vileness or extreme abasement. Declare thyself in words the inferior of all; believe thyself, in the inmost affection of thy heart, to be more worthless than any. Do, whilst there is leisure, what may redound to thy everlasting good.

Arise through the night for prayers and tears to God, that thou mayest be delivered from all the snares and offences of thy passions. For if thy soul be suddenly taken from thee, it will be found a sinner, and most loathsome, having no time of final repentance. What wilt thou say to death in the time of thy separation, when thou wilt no longer be allowed even the short space of one hour to live? Keep before thine eyes the day of death. Ponder well how thou wilt stand in the presence of thy Judge. Be continually trimming thy lamp in a perfect conversation; give diligence that it be always burning.

Despise the perishing things of time, that, like a great warrior, giving up the pomp of the world, thou mayest be able to earn the crown which shall be thine when the victory has been won. Return, miserable man, return at the voice of thy conscience; disburden thyself of the weight of earthly cares. Let not contention reign in thee, nor contradiction, nor any iniquity whatever. Spurn earthly things, strive after heavenly things, let go the things of time, love the blessedness of eternity.

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 13, 14.

For Lent.

Arouse thyself for a while from thy wretched sleep; open thy mouth, beseech God, cast from thee the weights of sins. Pray often, shed tears without ceasing. Flee softness of mind, execrate sloth, abhor malice. Love gentleness, cleave to continence, meditate on psalmody.

Make haste to pray whilst it is the time of repentance. Love God with all thy soul, as He has loved thee. Dread the Day of Judgment. From love of Christ reverence thyself. Keep guard every hour over the actions of thy life. Estrange thyself from the deeds of the world, that thou mayest be made an heir of the Kingdom of God.

Hear, O soul, what I speak. Pollute thyself no longer with any uncleanness, nor stain thyself with any lust; keep aloof, and withdraw thyself from every corruption of the flesh. Let wantonness no longer prevail; let lust no longer be your master. For better is it to die, than to be stained with lust. Better to yield up the soul, than by incontinence to destroy it.

Chastity brings man close to God, and God close to man; to the chaste the Kingdom of Heaven is promised. But if thou art still troubled with the stings of the flesh, if thou art still assaulted by the suggestion of lust, confront thyself with the thought of death. Set before thee the future judgment and future torments; set before thee the perpetual fires of Hell; set before thee the horrible pains of Gehenna.

Pray with tears without ceasing; pray continually; be instant in prayer again and again. Entreat God day and night, apply thyself to prayer assiduously, cease not from groans and cries. Rise for prayer in the night; pass the night in supplication and prayer; give thyself up to nightly vigils; return to prayer, after for a short time closing the eyes.

Frequent prayer keeps off the darts of the Devil; unclean spirits are driven out by perseverance in entreaty; by prayers demons are conquered. Every evil yields to prayer.

Renounce also fulness of bread; punish thy body with sparseness; intent on fasting and abstinence, wear a pallid look; bear about thee a meagre body. Be hungry and thirsty; abstain, and let thy moisture be dried up. Unless thou be schooled in fastings, thou canst not vanquish temptations.

Be thou humble; be thou grounded in humility; humble

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thyself; make thyself least of the little. Prefer thyself to no one; esteem thyself lowest of all. Think every one thy better. Esteem thyself least of all. Though thou be the highest, yet keep humility. For the lowlier thou shalt have been, the greater will be the glory which shall follow thee.

Beware of boasting; beware of craving after display; beware of the desire of vain-glory. Do not take upon thyself; do not boast thyself. Do not insolently extol thyself; do not spread out the wings of pride. Do not erect the feathers of self-conceit; presume nothing of thyself; ascribe to thyself no good.

Indulge not any elation of soul for the virtue of thy righteousness; be not lifted up with thy good deeds; glory not in any good work; humble thyself that thou mayest be exalted, lest, having been exalted, thou be humbled; for he who lifts himself up is humbled; he who exalts himself is cast down; he who elevates himself is prostrated; he who is puffed up is dashed to the ground. By pride fell the Angels; pride is the dissolution of kingdoms; arrogance humbles the lofty; humility knows no fall. Learn, wretched man, that God came in humility. Walk as He walked; follow His example; trace His footsteps.

Be vile in thine own sight; be abject; bear to be despised; put affronts upon thyself; be contemptible in thine own eyes. For he who is vile in his own sight is great before God. He who displeases himself pleases God. Be thou little in thine own eyes, that thou mayest be great in God's eyes; for thou wilt be so much the more precious to God, as thou art disesteemed of men.

Ever carry shame in thy countenance from remembrance of sin. From shame of thy sin blush to raise thine eyes. Walk with downcast look, with a sad countenance, with stricken heart; in mourning garb, wrapt in sackcloth, thy body clad in a hair vest; ever mourning, ever lamenting, ever groaning, ever uttering sighs from thy heart. Be compunction in thy heart, lamentation in thy breast; ever be enamoured of weeping and of mourning.

Be ever ready for tears. Let nothing give thee confidence touching sin; let hope and fear unceasingly hold a place to-

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gether in thy heart. So hope for mercy, as to fear justice; so let the hope of indulgence lift thee up, that the fear of hell may ever keep thee low.

In thine infirmities be not saddened; in thy weaknesses give thanks to God; desire rather to be well in mind than in body. Sickness wounds the flesh, chastises the soul.

If prosperity have smiled on thee, be not lifted up; if adversity have befallen thee, be not cast down. If some calamity have happened, be not of coward mind. Keep moderation in prosperity; patience in adversity. Know that thou art tried in pain; so be not lifted up.

Maintain equanimity in all things; let neither joy nor sorrow change thy mind. Let no event find thee unprepared.

Set before thy mind the thought that there is nothing which cannot happen. In prosperity, consider how to bear adversity; ever keep in mind miseries to come. An adverse event gives way before counsel; coming assaults are broken by forethought. Prepare thy heart, therefore, both for good and evil; and bear both good and evil as they come.

If anger overtake thee, check it; if it master thee by surprise, mitigate it. Temper rage; temper indignation; repress excitement of mind; bridle the violence of anger. If thou canst not avoid anger, at least moderate it. Learn rather to endure evil, than to repay it.

Be gentle, be patient, be meek, be moderate. Despise the reproach which an insult offered to thee carries with it. Break the arrows of contumely with the shield of patience. Prepare against a rough word the shield of patience; against the sword of the tongue offer the buckler of patience. Though every one provoke thee, exasperate, insult, revile, slander thee, move thee to a quarrel, taunt thee, wrong thee, heap abuse upon thee,—yet be thou silent, be thou still; do thou contemn, do thou disguise the offence; do not answer, do not retort a railing word. By silence thou wilt quickly vanquish.

Learn from Christ endurance; learn moderation. Look to Christ, and grieve not for wrongs. By the contemplation of justice, restrain thy grief. With all moderation appease thine enemies; overcome others' evil by thy good.

When slighted, therefore, do thou pray; when cursed, do

For Lent.

thou bless : oppose blessing to him who curses thee. By patience soothe the angry ; by caresses soften the indignation of the furious : overcome wickedness by mildness ; overcome malice by goodness. With a tranquil mind, also, disclose the contumely that thou hast endured. Open with a calm heart the grief of thy wrong ; for deeply does a wound that is concealed eat into the mind. If thou hast grieved thy brother in any thing, do penance before him. If thou art offended by a brother, entreat to be reconciled to him. Beg pardon for thine offence quickly ; with the most lively movement of affection, provoke him to pardon thee by thy humility. With suppliant mind entreat forgiveness ; with affection cast thyself at his feet.

Him that seeks forgiveness indulge with cheerfulness ; him who turns back instantly embrace. Forgive, that thou mayest be forgiven ; pardon, that thou mayest be pardoned. Thou shalt not meet with indulgence except thou bestow it. Though he supplicate not ; though he ask not to be forgiven ; though he have not the humility to entreat ; though he acknowledge not his sin from an evil conscience ;—do thou relax from thine heart, do thou forgive with all thy mind ; do thou freely shew him kindness ; do thou grant him pardon of thine own will.

Do not cherish grief of the heart ; dismiss from thy heart offence at a brother's fault ; cherish not grief at the sin of another. For hatred separates man from the Kingdom of God, withdraws him from Heaven, casts him out of Paradise. Hatred is not done away by suffering ; it is not even expiated by martyrdom.

Why should I speak of the fires of jealousy ? Envy burns up all the buds of virtues ; envy devours every thing good with its pestilent heat. It hurts itself first, bites itself first, first gnaws its possessor. Envy is the moth of the soul ; it eats into feeling, burns the breast, impairs the mind, feeds like some plague upon the heart of man.

Let goodness, therefore, be set forward to meet jealousy. Love peace, yea, love it exceedingly ; cherish peace with all ; embrace all in gentleness and charity. Be not insincere in peace. Be prompt in affection, and ever cherish the bond of constancy. Preserve an exorable and kindly spirit. In speech

For Lent.

be affable ; shew thyself grateful to all. Shun brawls ; avoid disputes ; beware of contentions ; remove occasions of disagreement. Keep aloof from quarrels ; live always in peace ; do no action in a contentious spirit. Contention is the parent of strife, the author of broils, lights the torch of discord, smothers the peace of the soul, destroys harmony.

If thine enemy have fallen, do not rejoice ; exercise rather a kind affection on occasion of his abasement. Indulge thy fill of weeping at the griefs of others. Wear not a breast of iron, nor an unfeeling heart. Bewail another's misery, as if it were thine own. Weep with them that weep ; and unite with them that mourn the sympathies of thy heart.

In all thy acts, in every work of thine, in all thy conversation, imitate the good, emulate the Saints. Set before thee the examples of the Fathers, for incitements to holy discipline. Let none be scandalised by the infamy of thy life ; let none be distressed by thy evil report. Study, O man, to be well esteemed ; maintain a good report. Let thy reputation be impaired by no ill savour, wounded by no reproach.

Beware of popular glory ; shun the admiration of a crowd ; despise popularity ; study rather to be good than to appear so. Let not men's applause beguile thee, nor their censure break thee down. Whoso courts not praise feels not contumely. Estimate thyself by thine own, not another's, judgment.

Such as thou wouldest be thought, such be. Shew thy profession both by thy dress and demeanour ; do not render thyself a gazing-stock ; give not to others an occasion to slander thee. Avoid the bad ; court the company of the good ; attach thyself inseparably to the holy. Better is it to have the hatred of the wicked than their company.

Control thy tongue even from unmeaning discourse. Immodest conversations abhor ; flee unseemly words. Prattle not empty words ; for vain talking quickly pollutes the mind, and what is willingly listened to is easily done ; let that proceed from thy lips which may not corrupt the ears of him who hears thee. Avoid the smallest things, lest thou come to the greater. Let what thou speakest be worthy, and pregnant with instruction.

Let thy speech be unblameable; let it meet the wants of the hearers. Discriminate when to speak, and when to keep silence. Deliberate long before what to say; in nothing be contentious. Let thy lips serve as a seal to thy tongue; set before it the barrier of silence; fence it round as with an armed guard. Let it be inquiry which opens thy mouth.

Let thy words be few. Much speaking wanteth not sin. The man of many words lacketh wisdom. The wise is brief-spoken. The unskilful maketh much noise, and saith nought with sense. Let there be a rule in thy words, and balance well thy speech.

Tear not in pieces another man's fame; defile not thy mouth by speaking of another's ill-doing; detract not from him that sins, rather condole with him. That which is the subject of thy detraction in another's case, dread in thine own. Detraction is a weighty crime, it is a heavy condemnation. It is the manner of dogs to tear in pieces, to use their tongues, to bite with poisonous tooth.

When thou detractest from another, sift thyself; when thou bitest another, be severe on thine own sins. If thou wilt detract, retort upon thine own sins; look not at another's faults, but thine own.

Never will any detract from another, who knows himself. Be, then, anxious for thine own correction; have thy mind fixed on thine own salvation, and then thou wilt not lend an ear to whisperers. Detractors, and they who listen to them, incur an equal guilt. Correct thine own faults as anxiously as thou lookest out for those of another.

Beware, also, in all things, of lying; speak not falsely, either by accident or design. No lie is righteous; every lie is sin. For every one who lies kills his soul. And *Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing*;¹ and *a false witness shall not be unpunished*.² Recoil, therefore, from deceit; shun lying.

Allow not swearing; be clear from an oath. Let thy conversation be yea and nay. Be not ready in words, and un-

¹ Ps. v. 6.² Prov. xix. 5.

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complying in action. When thou hast vowed amiss, change thy resolution.

Choose that place for sinning where thou thinkest the Lord is not. He sees the secret things Who made the hidden; and if public fame do not pronounce thee guilty, at least let thine own conscience condemn thee.

In every work implore God's aid; ascribe all to His grace and gift; attribute nothing to thine own merits, nor presume at all upon thine own virtue.

Vow nothing without considering thy strength. They rank among the unbelievers who fulfil not their vows. Conceal thy virtues, for fear of pride. Shun to seem what yet thou deservest to be.

Reveal the vices of thine heart; expose at once thy evil thoughts. A vice, if laid bare, from great becomes small; if kept out of sight, from small becomes great.

Deliberate long upon an opinion which is doubtfully balanced. Whatever thou wouldest do, examine long. In good things, let there be no sloth nor remissness, no dull carelessness. Whatever is serviceable to do, it is unserviceable to defer. By sloth the spirit waxes cold.

Nothing is better than wisdom; nothing sweeter than prudence; nothing pleasanter than knowledge; nothing is worse than folly; nothing more worthless than improvidence; nothing more shameful than idleness. The unlearned is easily deceived; the fool quickly slides into sin.

What thou utterest with thy mouth, execute in deed; let thy words be the forerunners of deeds. Beware lest, in raising others by instruction, thou be thyself overwhelmed by the thirst of praise.

Yield at once to truth; in discussion put away dispute and pertinacity of defence. Be fonder of hearing than of speaking; be the first to listen, the last to talk.

According to his dignity, render honour to every one. Yield to the authority of elders; attend to their will. But if commanded to do evil, acquiesce not nor consent.

Preserve due measure in every work. Do as thou wouldest be done by. Beware of honours which thou canst not keep. Honours amassed are often sins accumulated.

Why delay till to-morrow? Thou mayest make a gain of to-day. Beware lest thou both miss that, and lose this. Not insignificant is the loss of even one hour.

Day and night, therefore, entreat God, and restrain the eyes from wantonness. Take away the occasion, and remove the ground of sin. Order all with a tranquil, not with a troubled mind; and judge thyself more rigorously than any other.

Short is the happiness of this world, stinted the glory of this life. The power of the world is frail and transitory. Where, I ask, are the kings, the princes, the emperors? where? Where are the thriving? where the powerful? where the rich of this world? As a shadow have they passed away, and vanished like a dream.

Anxieties for the concerns of this life unsettle the mind. Wouldest thou enjoy repose? Have no worldly longings. Whoso entangles himself with the cares of earth, estranges himself from the love of God.

No one can embrace, at the same time, the glory of God and of the world. No one can embrace, at the same time, Christ and the world. Renounce, then, all for God. Aim at serving Him without impediment from the world. Be bounteous to all. Let thy good-will surpass the amount of thy gift; let thy gratitude exceed what is given thee. There is no mercy, where there is no kindness. Thy deed shall be such as thy intention.

Be thou the temple of God, and God Most High shall dwell in thee. Of the produce of thy righteous labours minister to the poor. Rob not one of what thou bestowest on another.

Whatever thou doest, do it for thy future reward, in the hope of thy eternal recompense: a future reward, not a present, is promised to the Saints. In heaven, not on earth, a recompense is promised to the just. That is not to be looked for here, which is to be given elsewhere.

Be dead to the world, and the world to thee. Regard the glory of the world, as though already dead; as one that is buried, have no interest in the world. Like one that is dead, rid thyself of every earthly business. Despise while living what thou canst not have when dead.

For Lent.

Aim at nothing with a view to praise, and this world's good opinion, but for the sake of life eternal; which He grant thee, who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, God for ever and ever. Amen.

II.

Homily of S. Bernard.*(1st for Lent.)*WHAT IT IS TO ANOINT THE HEAD, AND WASH THE FACE.¹

1. **T**O-DAY, my most dearly beloved, we enter upon the sacred season of Lent; the season of the Christian warfare. This observance is not peculiar to us; it is common to all, whosoever they be, that are joined in the same unity of the faith. How should Christ's fast not be common to all Christians? How should the Members not follow the Head? Why, if we have received good from His hand, should we not also take what is evil? Would we reject what is bitter, and partake of the sweet? If so, we prove ourselves unworthy of being partakers with this Head; for all He suffers is for us. But if it is given us to labour together with Him in the work of our own salvation, in what else shall we shew ourselves fellow-workers with Him? It is no great thing that he fast with Christ, who is to sit with Him at His Father's Table. It is no great thing that the Member suffer with the Head, with whom also it is to be glorified. Happy the Member that adheres in all things to this Head, and follows Him whithersoever he goeth. Else, if haply it should chance to be cut off and separated, it must needs be at once deprived even of the breath of life. For if any part whatsoever is disjoined from the Head, whence has it any more feeling or life? Nor, verily, will an occupant be wanting for the part estranged, that it be not even then without a head. The root of bitterness

Faithful
members re-
joice and suf-
fer with the
Head.

¹ S. Matt. vi. 16, 17.

will again sprout ; the poisoned head again shoot forth sprigs : that head, forsooth, which in him had been before ground to powder by the valiant woman, Mother Church. I speak of the time when he was regenerated through her to the hope of life ; whom by nature his mother, according to the flesh, had brought forth a child of wrath.

The virtue of
the Head.

2. If, then, there be that hath the eyes of his heart unveiled, and spiritually beholdeth these things, he will now see how altogether horrible is this monster, that hath indeed the body of a man, but the head of a demon. Nor is this all ; but the end of that man will doubtless be worse than the beginning ; since that viper's head, which had been before cut off, is not restored without seven more wicked than itself. Who does not tremble at the very sound ? Shall I take a member of Christ, and make him a member of demons ? Shall I cut myself off from the body of Christ, and be miserably incorporated with Satan ? Far be from us, my brethren, this ever to be execrated transformation. My good is to adhere to Thee in all, O my Head, glorious and blessed for ever, upon whom the Angels also desire to look. I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest : if Thou passest through the fire, I will not be torn from Thee ; I will fear no evil, since Thou art with me. Thou bearest my sorrows, and in my stead weepst : Thou passest first through the narrow portal of suffering, that Thou mayest open a wide passage for Thy members to follow. *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*¹ For this is that by which all the body increaseth through its joints and bands.² This is that good sodering of which Isaiah makes mention ;³ this is that through which it is good and pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity.⁴ This is that ointment which ran down from the head upon the beard ; which came down from the beard even to the skirts of the clothing, that even the minutest fringe might not lack its unction. Since in the head is fulness of grace, of which we all receive, in the heart is the entirety of mercy ; in the Head the inexhausted fount

¹ Rom. viii. 35.

² Vid. Col. ii. 19.

³ Is. xli. 7.

⁴ Psal. cxxxii. 2.

For Lent.

of divine pity; in the Head, the whole affluence of spiritual unction; as it is written, *God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.*¹ Yet that Head, which the Father had anointed with such fulness, Mary also was not afraid to anoint. The disciples indeed murmured; but the Truth answers for her, that she had wrought a good work.²

3. And what, lastly, is enjoined in to-day's³ Gospel upon us? *Thou, saith He, when thou fastest, anoint thy head.* O wondrous dignity! The Spirit of the Lord came upon Him, in that He anointed Him; and yet, nevertheless, preaching the gospel to the poor, He saith, *Anoint thy head!* The Father is well pleased with the Son; and as the voice resounds through the air, the Spirit descends in the form of a Dove. Think you, my brethren, that chrism was lacking in Christ's Baptism? The Spirit of the Lord abides upon Him; and who can doubt that He was anointed by Him? *This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*⁴ This is plainly the fragrance of the spiritual unction. The Father anointed the Son above His fellows, in that above the rest He took special pleasure in Him. For the Father loveth the Son with an affection altogether divine, and incommunicable to any creature. The Father, I say, anointed the Son above His fellows, loading Him with all the graces of benignity, gentleness, and sweetness; filling Him yet more abundantly with bowels of mercy and pity. And having anointed Him, at length He sent Him to us, exhibiting Him to us full of grace and pity. Thus hath our Head been anointed by the Father; nevertheless, His requirement is that He be anointed also by us. *When thou fastest, saith He, anoint thy head.* Seeketh He thus water from the streamlet; He, the unfailing Fountain? Doubtless He seeketh it; yea, verily, He rather demands it back again. For to the fountain from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.⁵

We are to
anoint our
head.

¹ Psalm xlv. 7.

² Vid. S. Matt. xxvi. 7-10.

³ Ash-Wednesday.

⁴ S. Matt. iii. 17.

⁵ Cf. Eccles. i. 7.

For Lent.

He anoints
Christ, who is
fragrant with
His grace.

4. But Christ demands not back again what He had given, as having less ; but in order that you may lose nothing by being willing to refer all to Him. Since the water of the river also, if it begin to stagnate, will both itself become putrid, and when floods arise, the water that comes down upon it will be ponded back. So it is plain, that where there is no onward flow of graces, there downward outpouring ceases : nor is it only that the ungrateful hath no increase, but what he had received is also turned to his loss. But he that is faithful in a little is thought worthy of a higher gift. Anoint, therefore, thy head ; refunding unto Him that is higher than thou whatever thou hast of devotion, of delectation, of affection. Anoint, therefore, thy head, that if thou hast any grace, it may be referred to Him ; that thou seek not thy own glory, but His. And he anoints Christ, who is a sweet savour unto Him in every place. Remember, indeed, that against the hypocrites this word hath gone forth : *Be not*, saith He, *as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance*. He forbids us not every kind of sadness, but that which is in the countenance, to be seen of men. According to another view : *The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning* ;¹ and Paul was not grieved that his disciples were sorrowful, in that they were made sorry to salvation.² Such is not the sadness of hypocrites ; it is not in the heart, but in the face : *For they disfigure their faces*.

Hypocrites
make them-
selves out to
fast for a
vain pre-
tence.

5. Observe, moreover, that He saith not, *Be not as the hypocrites, sad* ; but, be not *made*, that is, made out.³ Thus, forsooth, the common phrase runs : He makes himself out sad ; or, he makes himself some great one ; and, he that makes thee out blessed causes thee to err ;⁴ with other phrases, expressive not of truth, but of pretence. *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face*. They disfigure their faces ; but thou art bid wash. By the face is signified the expression which is stamped upon the countenance. This the faithful

¹ Eccles. vii. 4.

² 2 Cor. vii. 8.

³ Not, nolite *esse* ; but, nolite *feri*. *Vulg.*

⁴ Isa. ix. 16. Qui beatificat te, in errorem te adducit. *Vulg.*

For Lent.

servant of Christ washes, lest it cause any the least offence to the beholder; the hypocrite rather disfigures it, whilst he prefers to follow strange and unwonted courses. Neither, again, doth he anoint the head, whose affection is far off from Christ, and is pleased with empty favour. He the rather anoints himself, that he may scatter the fragrance of his own self-esteem. Or, indeed, because it is plain that Christ is not the head of the hypocrite; nor can any anoint his own head, be it of what kind it may, whose mind is not soothed by the testimony of his own conscience, but by adulation. *Give us*, say the foolish virgins, *of your oil*.¹ Why this? Because they have no oil in their vessels. But it is not the part of the prudent to give oil to such as these. For when will they do for others what they will not do for themselves? But hearken to the prophet, to whom God had revealed the doubtful and hidden things of His Wisdom. Let not, saith he, the oil of the sinner fatten my head.² Hypocrites buy that oil; as saith the Lord, *Verily, I say unto you, They have their reward. For they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast.* You see with how short a word He at once animadverts on the singularity of hypocrites, and charges them with vanity. See, also, in how few words He both exhorts to what is good in the sight of God, and of fair appearance before men. *Anoint thy head, and wash thy face*; that is, shew thyself outwardly so irreproachable, as to be careful to conciliate for thyself the favour of God; and before the eyes of men to seek not thine own glory, but that of thy Creator.

6. The washen face may, however, be otherwise taken as a pure conscience; and the anointed head as a devout mind. But if this meaning approve itself to the mind, these two expressions of washing and anointing appear to be spoken against a double fault, to which those who fast seem especially exposed. For one fasts out of a desire of vanity; and to him the words are addressed, *Wash thy face*. Another fasts with impatience and rancour; and such an one needs to anoint his head. But that head is the internal heart, which is then

In fasting,
the face to be
washed from
vanity, the
head anoint-
ed against
rancour.

¹ S. Matt. xxv. 8.

² Oleum peccatoris non impinguet caput meum. Ps. cxl. 5. *Vulg.*

For Lent.

anointed in fasting, when it takes spiritual delight therein. But seemeth it to thee a novelty, where we say that a head is anointed by fasting? I say more; it may also be fattened.¹ Hast thou never read what is written, *To feed them in the time of dearth?*² The fasting of the body is therefore the anointing of the head; and the hunger of the flesh the refectation of the heart. Why should I not call this unction, which both heals wounds and soothes agitated consciences? Let the hypocrite, then, buy with his fast the oil of a sinner; I, meantime, sell not my fast; and this is my own oil with which I am anointed. *Anoint*, saith He, *thy head*, that no murmuring or impatience may by any means intrude. And not only so, but we also *glory in tribulations*, as saith the Apostle.³ Glory, I say, but without any desire of vanity; that even the face may be clean from the oil of the sinner.

III.

Homily of Thomas a Kempis.

ON THE SACRED INSTITUTION OF FASTING AFTER THE RULE
OF JESUS CHRIST.

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Cor. vi. 2.

WE have reached the holy season of Lent, which is devoutly to be received, in conformity with the Church's wholesome institution, by all faithful Christians, especially by the religious brethren. Prepare thyself, accordingly, at this time, thou servant of God, for stricter living, more rigorous fasting, more frequent prayer, more diligent psalmody, that so, on the Day of the Lord's Resurrection, thou mayest be entitled to rejoice with the Lord in proportion to the amount of present abstinence. Take up with joy the Lord's Cross, which the Saviour of the world willingly took up for thee. For

¹ impinguatur.² Psal. xxxiii. 18.³ Rom. v. 3.

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the Cross is all affliction of the flesh, and all mortification of the senses; which ought ever to be kept in subjection, that they may not prevail against the spirit. This Cross is made easy and pleasant by the love and grace of Christ, who, by His own example and that of His Saints, hath left us a model of abstinence. Fear not, therefore, frail mortal; shrink not from fasting, like a coward. The cause is Christ's; Christ gave the example; Christ, the Founder of these so sacred observances, will also give thee good help towards performing them. For what thou doest is for thyself; when thou fastest, it is for thine own salvation thou labourest.

2. Why tremble, flesh and blood? The Saints of old were men of flesh and blood; and they lived many a time a life of abstinence. Were not the season of penance afflictive to the body and burdensome to nature, how could it be called, and how be, what it is? Thou art bound, then, during this brief interval of Lent, to do penance with the view of redeeming the negligences of thy past life; and to afflict thy soul for God, as a satisfaction¹ to Divine justice, in watchings and fastings, in prayers and labours, in silence and keeping retreat; no less than in other sacred observances, according to the custom of the Church, who makes a greater point at this, than at any other time, of crucifixion of the flesh. For every where at this season she protracts her vigils; multiplies her chants; prolongs her prayers; oftener bends the knee; bows nearer the ground; is more fervent in her devotions; more lowly in her adorations; more constant in fasting; more diligent in reading; more urgent in preaching; puts on gravity; is forward in pious deeds; maintains an honest report; is jealous of her discipline; and promotes with new ardour each ordinance of sanctity. Yea, every soul which refuses to afflict itself to-day shall perish from the company of His people; for unworthy is that soul to be numbered in the assembly of the Saints, who refuses to imitate the life of the Saints by abstinence.

3. Now must all our former life be changed for the better, and the flesh be tamed by suitable correction; that so, in the time of the Resurrection, it may flourish once more in new-

¹ ad recompensationem.

For Lent.

ness of life. The days of our negligence must be redeemed ; and fresh progress made in fervency of spirit, proportionate to the afflictions of the flesh. *For it is the spirit which quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing,*¹ that is to say, the pleasure of the flesh. Cast, therefore, thy care upon the Lord, and He will nourish thee by His Word, rather than by any meat. *For man* (He saith) *liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*² The fear, of which thou art conscious, is the love of thyself, more faint-hearted than is meet. Often an excess of fear, and a heart over anxious about the weakness of the body, distresses more than actual weariness from labour undergone. Were it not somewhat irksome, where were the sacrifice ? To live after the convenience of nature, this is not penance. But to fervour of spirit and manly resolution, the whole which any one performs seems but little. For such an one longs not merely to prune superfluous and noxious habits, but to abstain also from many things which are lawful. Let, then, the mind be vigorous, and the will prompt for fasting ; for many examples hast thou of companions in thine abstinence. First, make the present day an object ; and to-morrow add something to thy devotions ; and thus, as God is true, thou wilt make up the remaining sum. Ought not the whole of so holy a fast to be esteemed light, and of short duration, for the Kingdom of God's sake, and the love of Jesus Christ ? There is no place for shrinking ; and what matters, that there are many temptations that way ? Let each day's care be sufficient for it ; and do not double ills by anticipation ; but rather prepare thyself to undergo severer. The readier thou art, the lighter thou wilt make it, and the more acceptable to God. Perhaps this will be the last fasting-time of thy life ; and great joy will it yield, if brought to a good issue. How many fasted last year who have now passed out of this world ! It will be altogether pleasing to God, should that be done freely and cheerfully which must be done of necessity.

4. Away, then, with all carnal fear ; approach this wholesome fast with manliness and alacrity. Walk in the spirit of

¹ S. John vi. 63.² S. Matt. iv. 4.

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liberty; so shall not anxiety of the flesh engross thee. Contemplate diligently the examples of the holy prophets, Moses, Elias, and Daniel, whose abstinence from food was marvellous, and who often took delight in solitude. Consider also the most blessed John Baptist, that youth of a most excellent conversation, whom the Holy Spirit filled from his mother's womb, leading him in his tender years to the wilderness, where he long lived a solitary, in great abstinence and austerity of life. And then contemplate, above all the Saints, our Lord Jesus Christ, and place Him before thee for a singular example of abstinence; remember how He, Holiest of the holy, King of kings, and Creator of the worlds, the Consecrator and Founder of all times, performed the fast of forty days and as many nights, eating nothing all the while; teaching thee, by His most holy example, to fast, and contend bravely against the assaults of the devil. What is there which is not tolerable, what is not rendered amiable, by His example? For He is believed verily to have fasted rather for thee than for Himself. And not only consider His fasting, but study to derive an example from His continued solitude: how secretly did He lie concealed in the desert, lived on gentlest terms with the brute creation, and was thrice tempted of the Devil; furnishing a specimen of the solitary life, retreat from the world, avoidance of excitements, frequency in prayer, aptitude for contemplation, disengagement for God, retirement into self, and keeping guard over the heart.

5. O hadst thou, for ever so short a time, stood in that wilderness in company with the Lord Jesus, and apart from all society of men, wouldest thou not have found it exceeding sweet to have tasted nothing all those days? O how happy had it been for thee, couldest thou have lived a hermit with the Son of God, and enjoyed His company, to whom the Angels ministered! Where, think you, was His cottage, or the cave which was His shelter? Where the mat strewn under His body? On the earth He sits, on the earth He sleeps and reposes, Ruler though He be of heaven and earth. Behold Him now sitting, now standing, now bending His knees in prayer to God His Father Omnipotent. Go and join thyself to Him in devotion; and love to be alone with the Lonely, with nought but

For Lent.

JESUS for thy comfort; for better is it to have JESUS for thy associate, than all the company of the Angels in heaven. Verily, he is never alone, never all forsaken, who has the most sweet JESUS by his side. For without JESUS all the world is a weariness and a burden. Learn from Him, who is so patient and meek in this vast wilderness: how clearly does He open to the religious the path to retirement; shewing that, before going into public, leisure must be found for God and ourselves!

6. But interrogate Him on the cause of this manner of life, and say, What dost Thou here, Lord Jesus? Why dost Thou shun men, who art conscious of no hindrance from men? Why retire from crowds, whom no man can trouble? And why this rigour of fasting, this taming of the flesh, when in Thee there is nothing which requires to be kept under? Is it then for us and for our salvation, that Thou doest all this? Yea, verily, it is. For the sake of My Elect I both do and suffer all, that they may be saved. For I am come to give all an Example of life, by shewing in Myself, along what way, with what labour, and with what fruit also, my Kingdom of everlasting bliss may be reached.

7. But I entreat Thee, Lord, leave me not in the wilderness of this world; but be my cloud by day, for a shadow against the heat of temptation; and my pillar of fire by night, to drive away the darkness of the soul. May my Lord ever go before me, or His Angel, and lead me to the land flowing with milk and honey, that is, to the taste of interior sweetness. I (He answers) will perform thy petition, if thou wilt follow My conversation. I have pointed out the way of penance, the road to everlasting glory. Follow Me through labour and tribulation, if thou wouldest attain to rest and consolation. I have fasted, I have hungered; I have been tempted, I have withstood; I have set at nought the world and its glory; I have vanquished the Devil and his counsel, that thou by My example mightest learn to fast, to watch, to pray; to despise the world, to resist the Devil, to subjugate the flesh, and to persevere in obedience even to death. If, then, I have so laboured for thy salvation, and performed so great abstinence, I who am free from the sin alike of nature and of act, how

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much rather doth it behove thee, born in sin, and still bearing its fuel about thee, to crucify the flesh and cut off every occasion of sinning ! Labour, therefore, after thy measure, to fulfil the appointed rule of fasting ; execrating, I say not the necessity of nature, but the lust of the appetite. I will gladly receive the offering of thy free will ; and, sorry though that be which thou yieldest, the offering of a lowly and clean heart is never without acceptance from Me.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. VII.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF THOMAS À KEMPIS ;

FOR LENT.

(Part II.)

I.

OF THE MORE FERVENT AMENDMENT WHICH WE ARE TO
ENTER UPON AT THIS TIME.

*The days of penance are at our doors, for the redeeming of
sins, and the saving of the soul.*

BLESSED be God, who hath granted us a season and a rule, that we may do some penance for our sins. For so render we ourselves meet for His pity ; yea, for a richer supply of grace and of glory. O holy time of penance, bestowed on all men for their salvation ! proclaiming a truce to vices, preparing a path for virtues ; storing in compunction, fostering devotion, stripping off sloth, fanning the flame of zeal, and provoking to every good work. O fervour of devotion ! O love of correction ! now shew thy energy, and let the purposes which have hitherto been but conceived in the mind be manifest in action. Would that thou mightest perfectly conquer, were it but a single vice, or unlearn some one evil habit ! O that thou mightest now mount, if it were but one single step, in the path of virtue, or secure some special grace from the Lord ! Except thou labour at this time for proficiency, when wilt thou advance, and when correct thyself of any fault ? For seldom does any shew himself at an-

other time to be religious, who is not found at this more religious. At another time, to avoid unlawful things is matter of praise ; but now, not to practise continence in lawful things entails a censure. A holy season demands a holy conversation ; and many thousand examples of the faithful supply a fresh motive to our imitation. If it become every Christian at this time to live a stricter life, how much rather a religious brother, who ought to furnish other men with examples of holiness and abstinence ? We must therefore enter upon a new course of devotion, and keep closer guard over our senses, and follow up an entire renovation of the interior and exterior man. Let the mind be devout, and the prayer pure ; let there be often meditation, intent reading, few words and profitable ; let solitude be pleasant, and steadily persevered in ; let there be labour in the hands, piety in the will, and Christ always in the heart. For now we must keep more watch against the wiles of the enemy, whose assaults and temptations are ever directed with greater fury against the members of a religious profession, if haply he may make them tepid or impatient ; that so their labour may be rendered profitless, or their penance grievous, and the choir tedious. Nor can we wonder that he dares tempt us, who feared not to tempt the Lord Christ. But vanquished was he, that wretched one, and went his way confounded ; that so there might be given to us the hope of vanquishing, and we might not fear the devil, who have with us Christ the Conqueror. Let us resist, then, like men, and ever be constant in adversities.

2. It is not, verily, without reason that the Church chants so frequently, Let us commit ourselves to Him in much patience, by the arms of the justice of the virtue of God. Patience is at this time very necessary ; for many things arise which are repugnant to our nature, and which cannot be borne as they ought without internal grace. Howbeit, one esteems one thing, and one another, a greater burden, accordingly as he feels it to be more at variance with his own nature or way of life. And happy, therefore, and wise is he, who is already of manly stature, and fortified betimes with patience. For the sovereign remedy is, to give no credence to fear, and not to turn our backs upon the foe ; but to play the man, and

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to be even gladly willing to undergo yet stricter service for the Lord. For thus acted those holy men, our glorious forefathers; men inflamed with divine love, who first ordained this rule, and bequeathed it to be similarly observed by us. Lastly, our Lord Jesus Christ underwent the heavy punishment of the cross, and shewed forth His patience to us, for our comfort and perpetual imitation. Whoever, therefore, at this time behaves himself in all things with greater devotion, the more pleasant, doubtless, shall he find the holy Pasch. The stricter any one now is in the practice of abstinence, and the more anxiously bent on his interior progress, the more joyfully shall he exult with his risen Lord.

3. O good JESU, Thou sweet guest and faithful friend, come at the voice of my sighs and groans! Comfort me in my littleness during this sacred fast, duly consecrated by Thee. Give me strength of mind, and the riches of interior grace; that this fasting of the body may prove a cleansing from sin. Grant me so to abstain from bodily meats, that my mind may fast from all vices and passions. Guard me from my crafty foe, who strives in every way to hinder the purpose which I have conceived, and to check me in my holy fervour. Stretch to me Thine hand, good JESU; that without weariness, without elation, without distraction of heart, in Thy sight, during these sacred days, I may join in the psalmody of the choir; and with all fidelity may devoutly offer Thee the tithe of my days. Amen.

 II.

OF THE ASCENT OF MOSES INTO MOUNT SINAI.

Moses gat him up into the mount, and was in the mount forty days and forty nights.¹

HOW, think you, did that holy man converse there with the Lord? Who will reveal me this secret? O that I had been there, and could have deserved to hear Moses talking with God! For Moses spake, and God answered. Alone,

¹ Exod. xxiv. 18.

then, did he enjoy those divine communications, far removed from the intercourse of men. There did he receive the Law of the Decalogue. There did he gain insight into the hidden things of God, and various mysteries of our faith. There he learned in secret what he was afterwards to teach among the people. There was he instructed in the formation of the tabernacle, in the rite of sacrifice, in the order of the Priesthood. There learned he, in spirit and understanding, the purpose and typical significance of those external and visible institutions. There, free from all worldly cares, he was at leisure to see how gracious the Lord is, how blessed the man who rests upon His holy hill. There, suffering no weariness of body, he was refreshed with the bread of life and understanding.¹ There, in silence, he drank in the streams of the divine whisperings, and received grace to be fulfilled with the spirit of wisdom. Hence, through prolonged intercourse and repeated converse with the Lord in the mount, it happened to him wondrously, that his face became dazzling from the contemplation of God, and seemed to the beholders radiant with horns of light, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon him, but withdrew in terror until he had veiled himself, and thus tempered the splendour of his countenance in the sight of the beholders. O man of God, glorious and renowned, suffused and penetrated within and without with the lustre of the Divine glory!

2. Even so there are devoted lovers of Christ, who, while in the act of secret contemplation and converse with the Lord, are sometimes transformed into the glory of the new Life, and carry away with them such abundance of grace, that they become a wonder and a terror to others, so ardent is the zeal, and so rich the display of heavenly wisdom, which they exhibit. But that they may not become intolerable to the weaker, they wisely veil the grace which has flowed from the supernal visitation; they do but speak with humility such things as may profit and be best understood; what is dark and deep they reserve in their breast, desiring that these things should be known to themselves and God only, to whom they render all thanks from their innermost heart.

¹ Vid. Eccclus. xv. 3.

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3. O that thou also couldest with holy Moses ascend into the mount of virtues, and now, in this sacred season, tarry there a while with God, to hear His voice as He speaks to thee out of the midst of the cloud and the darkness! Perchance it would be granted thee to receive the gift of some special divine knowledge and illumination of soul, inebriated and overflowing with which, thou mightest disesteem all earthly things, and have thy affections set on the heavenly alone, so as to think little of the service of the body, and to gain a deep interior perception of the truth of Moses' saying, *Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*¹

4. But how is it that Moses only is bidden to go up, and with him a few of the elders of Israel? Verily herein is signified the fewness of the perfect, and the height of the life of contemplation; for the great multitude of men love to occupy themselves with the things of earth and sense. None, however, ascends to the summit of the mount and into the midst of the darkness, wherein God was, save Moses only, who was summoned up by the Lord as an act of special favour, and bidden to enter into His Presence. For to him it was said, *Come up to Me into the mount and be there.*² By grace he is called; by obedience he goes up; by the constancy of perseverance he abides. It beseems not to go up, except by preventing grace ridding the mind of every base delight; and then it befits to follow the leading of grace, even to union with God for a season, and there to rest from every thought till the Lord again gives the word, and man comes down to the works of charity. For even Moses himself, after a lengthened sojourn in God's Presence, is bidden descend for the instruction of the people, over whom he presided with pastoral solicitude. And thus it is shewn how every one who makes time for sweet and heavenly converse with God is bound to return, after experience of His graciousness, to the lowly and diligent discharge of pious offices. And thus, ascending and descending, he will always be making advances; never sitting at his ease, but ever either devoting himself internally to God, or externally to the service of his neighbours.

¹ Deut. viii. 3. S. Matt. iv. 4.² Exod. xxiv. 12.

For Lent.

5. *Go, get thee down*, saith the Lord; *thy people hath sinned*.¹ Devotion to God detained him; the people's danger forced him to return to the external world. He goes up for contemplation; he comes down again from compassion. The love of God draws him upwards; the love of his neighbour calls him back. In the mount it is the things of heaven only on which he meditates; in the lower world he has to quell strifes and variances. There, he clearly saw the Lord; here, he was seldom free from the madness of the people. There, he was rapt in the spirit above himself; here, often vexed on their account in exceeding weariness of soul. There, occupied with spiritual delectations; here, oppressed with fleshly burdens. Above, he was the recipient of divine communications; below, the frequent hearer of popular murmurs. There, he was in devotion and at peace; here, studious of meekness and patience. O how good and pleasant a thing it is to be with the Lord in the mount, and to be free from anxiety about things without! O how wretched and pitiable the condition of that man who is agitated by this world's rumours, and entangled in its perishable interests! Happy the soul which secular engagements do not hamper, nor affections of the flesh debase, but a pure intention ever lifts up without hinderance to God!

 III.

OF THE WORDS OF JESUS, AND OF PURITY OF HEART.

*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.*²

IF thou desire to receive the words of JESUS, apply thyself to thine interior life, and learn to walk in the spirit. For by the words of JESUS do we live; and in such is the life of thy spirit. JESUS truly is the Light of ignorance, and the One Solace of affliction. Listen, therefore, to the word which proceedeth from the mouth of God, and from the lips of the

¹ Exod. xxxii. 7.² S. John vi. 63.

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Blessed JESUS. For, saith the most pure JESUS, *Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.*¹ A high saying, for it is uttered by the Most High: a great promise, but ratified by Supreme Truth.

2. *Blessed are the pure in heart.* O sweet saying, which justly invites the mind to the promise of blessedness! For God is the prize, and there is nought here of an earthly sound. If thou art pleased with the promised blessedness, see that thou art pleased also with purity of heart, that thou mayest see the God of gods in Sion. That thy heart may be purified, let thy whole intention be on the watch, and let frequent prayer ever glow with new ardour. For a clean heart has the promise of an infinite good. Contemn, therefore, the world, and thou shalt gain Heaven. Relinquish creatures, and thou shalt find the Creator. Cease from temporal things, and eternal shall be given thee. Thou canst not weigh in one balance Heaven and Earth; nor canst thou equally enjoy God and the creature. Whoso leans upon created objects, is hindered from being disengaged for God. By purity from worldly thoughts, and freedom from passions, he is rendered worthy of the celestial union. For the purer any is, the more pleasing he is to God. God is Light, and loves those who are of the light. God is purity, and abhors the impure. Perishable is the love of the world, and without satisfaction the use of all things; but that which abides for ever is the soul's true good. The love of the Supreme Good increases as we despise every object of the world. There will arise to thee joy from within, if thou strive manfully against vices. And whilst abroad thou seekest nought that is transitory, the splendour of eternal light shines more brightly within. To a holy man the necessity of nature is a burden; but the pleasure of the flesh is to a chaste heart a calamity as of hell. For nought else do the allurements of the flesh produce but the flames of everlasting Gehenna. God grant that we may beware of these things in time, and cherish the dignity of Angelic purity!

3. Nothing more avails towards cleanness of heart than a perfect estrangement from the world, a renunciation of self for the love of Christ, and frequent meditation on the Incar-

¹ S. Matt. v. 8.

nate Word. Cleanse therefore the mirror of the heart, if thou desire to see God. Most full of delight is it to contemplate the Truth and eternal Wisdom. The healthy reformation of the interior man leads up to the condition of a purer life; while the curious pursuit of the things of sense beguiles and confounds the soul. May the repose of soul, which is the object of thy desires, vehemently attract thee to the perception of the inward satisfactions which they sweetly enjoy who pass their lives in purity! If thou burn to obtain the delights of this purity, beware of excitements, and cut off their occasions. Covet nothing high, nothing which enervates, nothing curious, nothing transitory, and thou hast at once pared away the most formidable disturbances. For he advances without impediment to God, who is clear of all secular desires. He mounts freely to heaven, as he prays, who is no way bound to earth. Neither the weight of the world nor the softness of the flesh can clog the wings of his soul. Securely he pierces the hosts of aerial spirits, who has a pure conscience in his keeping. Much to be desired is this pureness of heart, which conciliates to us God and the Angels. For the grace of this blessed gift we should strive vigorously, pray frequently, work without relaxation. The blessing of cleanness has its ground in the vale of humility, is gained by prayer and fed by tears.

4. O how gracious and fair is this virtue, which soars above all passions, and longs to be united with passionless Deity! For to purity every vice gives way; all creation is at its feet. It deals with God simply and without hypocrisy; hence it cannot be vanquished, but surpasses all in the Omnipotent. It is waited on by things above; and things below co-operate with it for good. Demons are scared by it; Angels emulate it; the carnal revere, the spiritual embrace it. Holy David, after humble confession of sins, entreats for the gift of cleanness of heart, saying, *Make me a clean heart, O God.*¹ He bewails the sin of his past life, charges himself with acting foolishly, entreats that the stains of the flesh may be burned out of him; and so he may be once more found clean in God's sight, be replenished with the joy of health, and never more sink down into deeds of shame.

¹ Ps. li. 10.

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5. This cleanness of heart is a ladder most erect, most bright, most solid, reaching to the summit of heaven, and penetrating to the view of God's glory. *Such honour have all His Saints.*¹ O most beauteous JESUS, author of all purity, who to the clean of heart hast promised everlasting joys, give me to possess for ever this choice and precious virtue, brighter than jewels and gold; that, far from all contagion of sin, I may gratefully serve Thee with a free spirit in a frail body, and may utterly cast away all the hinderances to purity, striving with the whole force of my desires to cling to Thee while I live in wretchedness among the eddies of this world, till Thou biddest me enter into Thy presence, and then, after Thy great mercy, vouchsafest to shew me Thy favour.

IV.

OF THE LOVE OF JESUS, AND OF SELF-RENUNCIATION.

*He that loveth his life shall lose it.*²

THUS speaks the most loving JESUS, wishing to detach thee from the cares and allurements of the world. Behold love and perdition. The Eternal Word of the Father saith it; He deceives thee not, but provides for thy salvation. The love of the world is perdition; the love of JESUS, the redeeming of the soul. The love of the flesh is folly; the love of JESUS, wisdom. The love of the creature lessens the love of the Creator; the love of the Creator brings freedom and disengagement from every creature. For they savour not alike, nor accord at all together. Love of self is full of fear and anguish; the renunciation of self is freedom unutterable. The love of self is an intestine ill, which is rarely conquered, unless God be perfectly loved. Contempt of self is a token of salvation; and he who begins with contempt shall be perfected in the love of JESUS. The love of self darkens the heart, is the parent of strife, and a bar to all progress. But he who for JESUS renounces himself, is at once

¹ Ps. cxlix. 9.² S. John xii. 25.

free and at peace. The love of JESUS is safe and strong; it is a stranger to the lovers of softness and the seekers of self. The love of JESUS gives entire all it is, and all it has; and seeks nought, save what it knows to be pleasing to God.

2. Wouldest thou be fully cleansed and refined in spirit? Despise thyself and all things for JESUS. Let all that is great in the world be as nothing to thee; let all that is pleasant be bitter; that God alone, and the sweet JESUS, may be above all things sweet to thee. What is in truth the love of JESUS, save contempt of thyself and all things, for the love of Him? and this is he who finds himself and every good thing in God. Wouldest thou save thy soul, condemn now the present life. If thou wilt only keep the rugged way, thou shalt go into eternal life. Hard to carnal and worldly men appears the saying of self-renunciation, and of the loss of the present life; but to the lovers of Christ it relishes sweetly above the honey and the honey-comb; for the true renunciation of self for God's sake prepares an eternal kingdom. The love of JESUS knows how to suffer present ills, and has strength to break away from temporal advantages. It fears not to be slighted, nor covets honours. It knows how to be silent under injuries; it harbours no thought of retaliation.

3. The love of JESUS has a consolation which is unseen; it waits for fruit which shall never fade. *I have chosen you*, saith He, *out of the world*,¹ calling you by My grace; that ye may go out from yourselves, forsaking your own will; and that ye may *bring forth the fruit* of charity, loving Me above all things; and *that your fruit may remain* in everlasting blessing, reigning with Me. But the fruit of the flesh is death, which is followed by the worm that never dies, and everlasting fire. From which may He keep us, who has taught us to despise the world, and to tame the flesh, even Jesus Christ, our love and our redemption! Amen.

¹ S. John xv. 19.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. VIII.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF THOMAS À KEMPIS ;

FOR LENT.

(Part III.)

I.

OF FOLLOWING THE POVERTY OF CHRIST, AND CASTING AWAY
CARE OF TEMPORAL THINGS.

*Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.*¹

THIS saying of JESUS must frequently be pondered by thee, and carefully implanted in thy heart, whoever thou art that aimest at leading a religious life. JESUS commends to thee the high estate of His poverty, by which is purchased a celestial kingdom ; which estate also Himself, as poor in the world, chose, and most strictly maintained. Yea, He would have thee seek no consolation of earth ; because Himself had not here a temporal rest, neither did He frame for Himself on earth a material house wherein to dwell. The beasts have dens for their lurking-places, and the birds have nests or holes for their rest ; but JESUS reared for Himself no tabernacle at all ; nor by others' aid procured He either house or board. But He lived as poor, and a mendicant ; He traversed the world's path like a stranger hurrying along ; and quitted it, as a guest of another country. No house made with hands

¹ S. Luke ix. 58.

did the Eternal Wisdom build for Himself; nor did He hire any such in villages or in cities, or in fertile regions without the city; but content with the common lodging of His friends, He followed in every thing the simple ways of the needy, nowhere taking delight in the lofty tents of sinners. What was given to Him for His support, He bestowed in common, and made over to others to distribute. He would have nothing for private use; but sparingly availed Himself of such things as the necessity of nature demanded. If aught, perchance, remained over of His scanty pittance of money or provisions, He caused it to be expended upon the poor. Accordingly, He forbade in His perfect followers all unnecessary care for the things of the world; in condescension, however, to human infirmity, He, in His merciful loving-kindness, grants to His disciples the necessities of life.

2. Once Peter was for persuading Him to make three tabernacles,¹ when in a state of dull amazement he was enjoying the heavenly vision on the mount, entranced with delight at the unwonted brightness of the Presence of Jesus, in the company of Moses and Elias. But in this petition, as seeking what was unmeet, he was not heard. For the habitation of Christ and of the Saints consists not in earthly tabernacles, nor in corporeal forms, but in the blissful mansion of the celestial kingdom, which passeth all sense and understanding of men. And verily the Framer of Heaven and earth, JESUS, reputed the son of the carpenter, could easily have constructed a house or temple to His Name, even without hatchet or axe; but the Heavenly Master and Artificer of all virtues came not down on earth to repair the things of the body; for He had no respect to wood and stones, oxen and sheep, farms and revenues; but the healing, instructing, and redeeming of souls,—this was His care. He declared His power by better deeds than these, performing cures with a gentle touch or a single word. He taught wisdom also by good acts and words, speaking of the Kingdom of God, dissuading from the transient joys of the world. He gathered around Him the lowly and the simple; the haughty and the rich He sent empty away.

¹ S. Matt. xvii. 4.

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3. Do thou also, therefore, lay aside all unprofitable anxiety for temporal things, occupying thyself wholly with thy future treasures: cast all thy care upon the Lord, meditating on things of heaven. Labour not greedily for the necessities of life, that thou mayest have plenty in time to come. Suffer others also to labour for themselves, that they may have whereon to live. Rather labour for thy soul, and for the acquisition of grace, than that the flesh may be well fed—that flesh which is hereafter to be the prey of worms: See that thou toil not too much for temporal things, and so neglect thy spiritual exercises. It is good to seek the common weal, but spiritual rather than terrestrial. It is good in the sweat of the face to eat bread; but see thou forget not the Bread of Heaven. Exercise thy labour in the days of thy vanity, saith the Wise man, lest perchance thou leave all to a man that hath not laboured and is ungrateful.¹ Thou canst not of thyself enrich all thy posterity, nor provide against all losses. Study rather to leave behind thee a pattern of virtue, than a competency of earthly goods. How knowest thou, whether it be well for thyself and others to possess more? Desire not what is unsafe. For desire will never be satisfied; nor is covetousness extinguished by the value of any of its acquisitions.

4. Follow thou Christ's poverty, and be content with the supply of nature's sparing wants, and that for the love of Him who was content to possess neither farms, nor revenues, nor chest, nor houses. Oh, how sad to think that many waste their time in vain solicitude, apply themselves superficially or seldom to their interior life, and grow miserably callous to what is within! Lift up thine heart on high; do not grovel like the beasts on earth. Thou must be fed with the food of Angels; the Word of God is the feast of souls. That is the Bread of Life, which the Lord JESUS will give thee, that so thou faint not in the wilderness. The same good and loving Lord, who has promised the eternal, will not refuse the temporal. Seek thou the things of Heaven, and He without doubt shall add what is needful all the days of thy life.

¹ Vid. Eccles. ii. 21.

II.

OF THE WEARINESS OF JESUS, AND OF HIS SAVING DOCTRINE.

*JESUS, therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well.*¹

THE most patient JESUS vouchsafed for our sakes to feel weariness. No carriage, nor chariot, nor horse, did He use, whilst He walked upon the earth; but in the name of the Lord He went His way on foot. On one occasion we read that He sat upon an ass, and for a short distance rode thereon; rather for an example of humility than for the purpose of convenience; not to court respect, but to fulfil the word of prophecy. A good example therefore shews He to holy preachers and religious persons, that they ride not in stately pomp, nor lavish sumptuous expense on their journey; lest they engender scandal to seculars, and an occasion of murmuring to their own fraternities.

2. Note this, my religious brother; behold JESUS *wearied with His journey*, not passing by as one who walks abroad for recreation. But if thou needs must have recreation, go not away openly or to a distance, lest by thy roving abroad thou offend others. But turn aside to the portion of the lot of the Saints; where thou mayest hear the word of God, or behold examples of sanctity. That man sets about but poorly to find recreation, who begins by destroying the satisfaction of a good conscience. Very empty is he within, and but of sorry devotion, who is found prone to make excursions. Esau, *a cunning hunter*, while tarrying out in the field, is deprived of his birthright. But Jacob, *a plain man dwelling in tents*, whilst obeying his mother in humility, and restraining his steps from wandering abroad, received with wonderful quickness his father's blessing.² The cunning man is deceived in his own ways, whilst placing his hope in his bow and quiver; the plain man is succoured in his own season, whilst intent upon God, without murmuring. They are apt to prove slower about leaving home and busying themselves in worldly affairs,

¹ S. John iv. 6.

² Vid. Gen. xxvii. 20.

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who give more diligent heed to the concerns of their interior life. But slothful minds daily fall away, and are reduced by wearing cares, or violent excitements, to the loss of self-mastery. Let him that would be cured of this roving tendency, and regain the light of the heart, be strenuous in keeping watch; and let him ponder the end of his days, and the hour of a strict Judgment.

3. Learn too, from this act of JESUS, that virtue is to be practised in union with discretion. For to weary oneself with the labour of the community, at the call of charity or the command of obedience, is a signal mark of virtue, and no little merit. But to take time for thought at the proper season, and to refresh the body with food, or edify the mind with sacred reading, belongs to the discreet government of both the inner and outer man. Well therefore may weariness be borne for the Saviour's name, nor should the devout shrink from it, seeing that they are almost without number who weary themselves for the world. But let labour be with discretion, that so it overpower not the weak, and unfit him for the divine life. For whatever is undertaken with moderation is more likely to continue. It is quite allowable, for the repairing of our strength, to go out at times when weary, and to remember the frailty of our nature. For JESUS Himself, after the fatigue of His journey, sat down upon the well, waiting for meat, and humbly asking for water to drink.

4. We may consider also, in this circumstance of the well, the teaching of JESUS, so profitable for the conduct of this mortal life. He instructs thee what to do, on ceasing from labour, and what is the sort of recreation to be desired. For it is not becoming, when we can labour no longer, to listen to stories, or to take pleasure in sleep, or to wander abroad among the shops. What then? sit rather upon the well, seek spiritual consolation, and ask eagerly, with the woman of Samaria, for the gifts of saving wisdom. Attend the streams of holy Scripture, and what thou readest ponder well, that so thou mayest repair the soul, shake off sloth, avoid idleness, and acquire new compunction. Let the tongue be silent in the world, that the mind may be fed within. Let it not grieve to pray often, and to meditate upon the loving JESUS. Learn to

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pass from material objects to the concerns of the interior life; and to mount up from creatures to the praise of the Creator. Thus did even JESUS Himself. For, taking occasion by this earthly well, and the question of the woman who came to Him, He began to preach the word of salvation, and to proffer the draught of heavenly grace. She asked for the water of the well; but she carried back with joy the knowledge of life drawn from the celestial river. So marvellously was she refreshed and gladdened by the speech of JESUS, dropping, as it were, with honey, that she forgot her waterpot, and ran to tell the men of her city the wonderful works of God. And this is a mark of great grace attained, when any in reading, praying, and meditating, is so moved to compunction as to lose all thought of present convenience, and glow with the love of the fountain of life, of which holy David, in the ardour of his soul, thus sings: *My soul is athirst for God, the Living Fountain.*¹

5. Again: on His disciples coming out of the city, when they prayed JESUS to eat, He shews that the bread of obedience, which feeds most richly the soul that is subject to God, is to be preferred to all bodily food. Verily no draught is sweeter than celestial grace, which cleanses the polluted, gives drink to the thirsty, and refreshment to him that is assaulted with temptation. Nor has any food a higher relish to the taste, nor is any richer table spread before loving eyes, than the fulfilling the command of Heaven; as JESUS, most obedient, Himself declares, *My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me.*² For to inquire what is God's good pleasure in all his actions, has a relish above all things to one who loves Him, and richly nourishes the submissive disciple, and cherishes him with spiritual joy, for the merit of his obedience. Thus Elias, whilst penetrating the waste of the wilderness, and dwelling at liberty within his own spirit, at the command of the Angel arose and eat; and when he had fulfilled the word of the Angel, walked in the strength of that meat, even to the mount of God.³ For true obedience leads, through short labour, to the summit of perfection, and to the mount of eternal rest;

¹ Vulg. Ps. xli. 3. Deum fontem vivum.² S. John iv. 34.³ 1 Kings xix. 8.

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where is full refection from all toil and labour, and possession of entire bliss, in the presence of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ, with the fruition of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

III.

OF THE WRITING OF JESUS, AND OF HIS MERCY TOWARDS THE WOMAN THAT WAS TAKEN IN SIN.

*But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground.*¹

THE amiable JESUS, the loving Teacher, the faithful Master, the just Judge, and merciful Saviour, is set before us as a Scribe; who wrote, not with ink, but *with His finger on the ground*. A good Scribe was He, who recorded mercy for the poor, and dispensed pardon to the sinner; nor acted He contrary to the Law, when he tempered the rigour of the Law. For the miserable need mercy, and with good reason ought the truly penitent to receive pardon. O how fair is that writing, and how wondrous the skill of that finger of God, when the sinner, wet with tears of contrition, He comforts with words of clemency; and with wisdom convicts her malicious and crafty accusers, bent upon vengeance, hardened against pity; and shews by His words how they deserved confusion, saying, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her!*² This was to confound the accusers, and to deliver the penitent from the mouth of the wolves.

2. And now, gracious JESU, what sayest Thou to the woman? Standing as a culprit, she waits for a good word; she submits herself to Thy judgment; do Thou return an answer of comfort. As Thou art wont ever to be merciful, so art Thou now. *Neither*, saith He, *do I condemn thee.*³ What could be more merciful, and more abundant, as to the largeness of the indulgence? Comfort thee, then, penitent culprit, now that thou hast heard a word of such exceeding

¹ S. John viii. 6.² S. John viii. 7.³ S. John viii. 11.

pity: if God be for thee, who shall be against thee? It is Christ JESUS that justifies, who is he that condemns?¹ And what more wilt thou do? what offer in satisfaction for sin? It repents thee of the wickedness thou hast committed; but thou must use greater caution for the future, to avoid a relapse. *Go*, saith the most merciful JESUS, *and sin no more*. What more brief and full for absolution, and the satisfaction of a perfect penance? He who reads the heart, knew the greatness of the sinner's contrition. Therefore did JESUS use more abundant clemency, that she might not be swallowed up with over much sorrow; for, in that she was publicly accused, great shame endured she for her fault.

3. Thou hast heard the clemency of the Saviour, to the great comfort of sinners; study thou also to acknowledge thy sins, and worthily to lament them, ere thou be taken captive by most wicked spirits, and compelled in the future Judgment to render an account of all. Say with the Publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.² Nor doubt of the mercy of thy Redeemer, so that for the future thou be willing, with all thy strength, to beware of such things as thou hast committed, and perfectly to amend thy life.

4. Consider also in this action of JESUS, what He did when He wrote. Nor marvel that He knew how to write; nor inquire with the Jews whence He knew how to read or write, seeing that He had not learned letters from men.³ Such questioning is foolish, and false is this fanciful conceit about the school of JESUS. For the Wisdom of God needed no human master, seeing that He, to enlighten all the sons of men, was born a Master into the world. He was not only apt Himself at reading and writing, but was able also to render unlettered men, I mean the Apostles, on a sudden without sound of words, most skilful in all knowledge of tongues. And what wonder is there that characters invented by mortal men should be understood by the Author of life, who ever most clearly sees the secrets of the heart, and the mysteries which have been hidden from ages? Nevertheless it delights to hear, that JESUS knew how to read and write; for thus

¹ Vid. Rom. viii. 33.² S. Luke xviii. 13.³ S. John vii. 15.

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the art of writing, and a zeal for reading sacred books, gains greater sweetness; which art many of the Saints have learned, and both by mouth and hand have most diligently practised, whilst living in the flesh, and by their writings have shed the brightest lustre upon holy Church. Therefore was JESUS an august Doctor, a Preacher with whom none may compare; the Author and lover of holy writings; an example of life, full of edifying words, and wondrous in the power of miracles. Be it thy pleasure then to imitate JESUS in reading, writing, and keeping the other rules of holy Religion, that, though unqualified for preaching, thou mayest yet edify others by a life worthy of God.

5. A very good work it is to write books, which JESUS loves, in which He is Himself acknowledged, read, and preached. Nor doubt we but that we shall be loved of Him, and plentifully rewarded, if we have diligently written ecclesiastical books to God's honour, and our neighbour's good. If he shall not lose his reward who gives a cup of cold water to the thirsty,¹ how great an one shall he receive, who by his writings supplies the soul that is to live for ever with the water of salutary wisdom? Every letter thou formest, with a religious intention, is a sacrifice of praise to God. It is meritorious, therefore, and devout to give time to writing books, and to preserve, with singular reverence and jealous care, all those out of which the divine Office is daily celebrated, and by which manifold instruction is scattered abroad.

6. For sacred books are the arms of clerics, the ornaments of churches, the riches and treasures of Doctors, the trumpets of the Priests, the solace of the Religious, the feast of the devout, the testament of Saints, the luminaries of the faithful, the nurseries of virtues, the instruments of the Holy Spirit. To write books, then, is a work acceptable to God; to read them is profitable; to teach them, commendable; to preach them, wholesome. But who could read or preach without knowing the writings of the Saints, and unless another had first written? Blessed therefore is the hand of him who writes, and blessed are the fingers employed in such a work. JESUS teaches thee by His example, writing with His

¹ S. Matt. x. 42.

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finger on the ground; in like manner do thou also write willingly the words of God, which, whilst one reads, and another preaches, thou wilt gain the highest reward of the manifold fruit of the labours of thine hands. Which may our Lord JESUS Christ grant, the Rewarder of all the good, in whose sight all the hairs of thy head are numbered, and no single letter that thou writest can ever perish. Go forward, then, and blessing be with thee. Amen.

IV.

OF KEEPING HUMILITY, AND OF THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR OWN FRAILTY.

*When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.*¹

THIS saying of the Lord JESUS gives us much instruction towards the keeping of humility, and the exclusion of all vain-glory and pride. It especially admonishes such as covet eminence to keep in mind their own frailty and negligence, and not to boast themselves of their good works, even though, according to man's judgment, they be great achievements; but fearing the judgment of God upon themselves, humbly to implore His mercy, instead of presuming upon their own merits. For so cries holy and humble David, in his fear, to God, *Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified.*² How vile, then, shouldst thou be in thine own eyes! how greatly fear the Judgment from above! thou who art so far from the holiness of David, that great King and Prophet. Thou art neither King nor Prophet; nor hast thou ever merited, like him, to be called holy and elect after God's own heart. Yet did he fulfil the Lord's saying, confessing himself an unprofitable servant; calling himself a fly, a dog, a worm; cherishing no high thoughts of himself, notwithstanding his wonderful deeds.

¹ S. Luke xvii. 10.² Ps. cxliii. 2.

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2. Recal to memory past evil deeds, present vices, future dangers, and thou shalt no longer be high-minded, but rather fear, and acknowledge thyself vile and unprofitable. God needs not thy service, even though thou have done right; neither shalt thou worthily please Him, except thou own thyself an unworthy and unprofitable servant. *When ye shall have done*, saith He, *all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.* If thou ought to say this, after thou hast done all His commandments, and hast no right to glory in any thing, how vile and unworthy oughtest thou to esteem thyself, since day by day thou failest and doest amiss in so many things, and bringest almost nothing to perfection! When hast thou been able through a single day or hour to have thy conversation before God and men so upright and guarded, as to neglect nothing which thou oughtest to do, and to do it all as thou oughtest? So widely spread is human infirmity, that even things which in man's judgment are praised as just, are not free from its infection. Away, then, with all vain complacency and arrogance; and look to the extent of thine own unprofitableness. Examine the depravity and instability of thy thoughts, and thou wilt find that thou art not only unprofitable for good, but subject to many ills, and worthy of contumely and punishment. Now the only remedy and solace of a contrite spirit, is in earnest to humble oneself for such innumerable negligences and the stains of so many sins, and to esteem oneself inferior to all, and worthless; anxiously redeeming past sins and daily negligences with the coin of confession and with the shield of good will, and being frequent and instant in devout prayer. Set thyself manfully therefore against the assaults of vices; for the more any one advances in virtue, the more earnestly does he loathe and overcome his vices. And although thou be often tempted and fall, yet shouldest thou strive to rise again, and take up thy good purpose with greater caution, and say with the Prophet, *I have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed, to keep Thy righteous judgments.*¹ As often, then, as thou failest in the purpose on which thou hast entered, and hast not strength to

¹ Ps. cxix. 106.

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perfect it, despair not, neither be cast down; but trust in the Lord, and with all humility and great earnestness cry and pray, *Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe; yea, my delight shall be ever in Thy statutes.*¹

¹ Ps. cxix. 117.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. IX.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. BERNARD ;

FOR LENT.

(Part IV.)

I.

(2d for Lent.)

HOW WE MUST TURN TO THE LORD.

*Turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning ; and rend your heart, and not your garments, saith the Lord Almighty.*¹

WHAT is the meaning of our Lord's precept, my most dearly beloved, that we should turn to Him ? For He is every where, and filleth every thing, at the same time encompassing the whole. Whither shall I turn, O Lord my God, that I may turn to Thee ? If I climb up into heaven, Thou art there ; if I go down to hell, Thou art there also.² What wouldest Thou ? whither shall I turn to Thee ? Above, or below ? to the right hand, or to the left ? This is His counsel, my brethren : it is a secret, to be entrusted to none but His friends ; it is a mystery of the Kingdom of God. It is revealed in the ear to Apostles ; for to the multitudes nothing is said without a parable. *Unless ye be converted, saith He, and become as this little child, ye shall not enter into*

¹ Joel ii. 12, 13.

² Ps. cxxxix. 8.

For Lent.

*the kingdom of heaven.*¹ Acknowledge, without doubt, whither He would have us turn. We must needs turn to the Little Child, that we may learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly of heart: since for this purpose to us the Child is given. Verily this same is also great, but in the city of the Lord, to which also it is said: *Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Sion; for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.*² Why art thou puffed up, O man? Why boastest thou thyself without a cause? Why searchest thou out deep things? and why beholdest thou with thine eyes every high thing that is not for thy good? The Lord is high indeed, but He is not so set before thee: to be praised is His greatness, not to be imitated. Exalted is His greatness, and thou canst not reach it; no, though thou exhaust thyself, thou canst not lay hold thereof. Man, saith He, shall come to a deep heart, and God shall be exalted.³

For though the Lord be high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: as for the proud, He beholdeth them afar off.⁴ Humble thyself, and thou hast laid hold of Him. This certainly is the law of piety; and by reason of Thy law I have waited for Thee, O Lord.⁵

If, perchance, the way proposed had been one of exaltation, and if thither led the road wherein the salvation of God was to be shewn,—what great things would men do that they might be exalted! With what cruelty would they lay each other low, and trample on each other! With what impudence would men creep aloft, and with hands and feet strain themselves to rise, that they might raise themselves above the heads of others! And he, truly, that strives to excel his neighbours, will experience many difficulties; he will have many rivals; he will certainly have to endure many opponents rising up against him: but nothing is more easy to one that has a good will than to humble himself. This is the word, my most dearly beloved, which leaves us so wholly without excuse, that it suffers us not to hide ourselves behind even the very thinnest veil.

2. But let us now see how we must turn to this Young

¹ Matt. xviii. 3.² Isa. xii. 6.³ Ps. lxiii. 7, 8. D.⁴ Ps. cxxxviii. 6.⁵ Ps. cxxix. 4. D.

For Lent.

Child, this Master in meekness and humility. *Turn ye*, saith He, *to Me with all your heart*. Brethren, if He had said, *Turn ye*, and had added nothing more—we might perhaps have been free to answer, I am turned; issue now another command. But now He admonishes us (as I take the words) of spiritual conversion, which is not the work of a day: O that it may be consummated even in our whole life, whilst we abide in this body! For the mere conversion of the body, if that be all, will be of no avail; since this is indeed the outward show, but not the reality of conversion, which hath the appearance of piety without its power. Miserable is the man that occupieth himself wholly in external affairs, and is ignorant of his own interior; that thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, deceiving himself. *I am poured out like water*, saith the Psalmist in the person of such a man as this, *and all my bones are out of joint*.¹ And another of the Prophets saith, *Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not*.² For he looks upon his outward form, and imagines all to be safe, feeling nothing of the hidden worm that is consuming his inward parts. The tonsure remains; he has not yet changed his habit; he keeps his rules of fasting; he is in choir at the appointed hours; but *his heart is far from Me*, saith the Lord.

3. Look well to what thou lovest, what thou fearest; what affects thee with joy or sorrow; and under the habit of religion thou wilt find a worldly mind, a perverse heart under the ragged garments of conversion. For the whole heart exists in these four affections. And it is of these, I think, that should be taken which is said, that with thy whole heart thou be converted to the Lord. Henceforth let thy love be turned to Him, that thou love nothing whatever besides Him, or except on account of Him. To Him also be turned thy fear; for what fear soever thou entertainest for any thing beside Him, or not on account of Him, is a perverse fear. So also thy joy and thy sorrow; be they no less converted to Him. And this will be accomplished by thy admitting neither joy nor grief, but according to Him. For what more perverse than to rejoice when thou doest ill, and to exult in the greatest

¹ Ps. xxii. 14.² Hosea vii. 9.

evils? And the sorrow also which is according to the flesh worketh death. If thou weep for thy own or thy neighbour's sin, thou doest well, and this sorrow is to salvation.¹ If thou rejoice for the gifts of grace, this is a holy joy, and a secure joy in the Holy Ghost. Thou art also bound, for the love of Christ, to rejoice in the prosperity of thy brethren, and to condole with them in their adversities; as it is written, *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*²

4. But neither is even that external conversion to be little thought of, since it is known to be no slight help to this that is spiritual. Hence it is that in this place, when the Lord had said, *with all thy heart*, He straightway added, *with fasting*; which is wholly external. Yet I would have you observe, my brethren, that this fasting is not to be from meats alone, but from all allurements of the flesh, and all carnal pleasures; yea, verily, you must fast far more from sins than from food. But there is a bread from which I would not have you fast, lest, perchance, you faint by the way: if you know not what bread I mean, I will tell you—the bread of tears. For the words follow: *with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*. For repentance as to past conversation requires us to mourn; and desire of future beatitude obliges us to weep. *My tears have been my meat day and night*, saith the Prophet, *while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*³ Little pleaseth him the newness of this life who mourneth not yet his old things, mourneth not yet the sins he hath admitted, mourneth not yet his lost time. If thou weep not, thou plainly feelest not the wounds of thy soul, the hurts of thy conscience. But neither art thou sufficiently desirous of future joys, if thou askest them not daily with tears: thou knowest but little of them, unless thy soul refuses comfort until they come.

5. Lastly, the Prophet adds: *and rend your heart, and not your garments*. By which words, that former people of the Jews is clearly convicted both of hardness of heart and vain superstition; since rending of the garments was common enough with them, but not of the heart. For when could their stony hearts be rent, seeing that they could not

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 10.² Rom. xii. 15.³ Ps. xlii. 4.

For Lent.

even be circumcised? Who is there among you whose will is wont to be more than ordinarily obstinate upon some one point? Let him rend his heart with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; yea, let him rend it; let him make haste to tear it into the smallest fragments. Turn to the Lord with his whole heart he cannot, except with a rent heart. For until thou hast attained that compactness of excellence which is found in Jerusalem—the city at unity in itself—many things are meantime commanded thee; and if thou offend in one thing, thou art guilty of all. *The Spirit of the Lord is manifold*, saith the Wise man;¹ and thou canst not follow the manifold but with a manifold rending. Harken, then, to the man whom God found according to His own heart: *O God*, saith he, *my heart is ready, my heart is ready.*² Ready for adversity, ready for prosperity; ready for what is lowly, ready for what is exalted; ready for all things whatsoever Thou orderest. Wilt Thou make me a shepherd of sheep? Wilt Thou appoint me king of the people? *O God*, *my heart is ready, my heart is ready.* Who is faithful as David, going out and coming in, and advancing to the empire of the kingdom? And concerning sinners he said:³ Their heart is curdled like milk: but I have meditated on Thy law. For from hence cometh hardness of heart, from hence obstinacy of mind, because men delight not in the law of the Lord, but in their own will.

6. Let us therefore rend our hearts, my most dearly beloved, that so we may also keep our garments whole. For virtues are our garments: a good garment is charity; a good garment is obedience. Happy he that keepeth these garments, that he walk not naked. Lastly, *Blessed is he whose sin is covered*:⁴ and, *Charity shall cover a multitude of sins.*⁵ Let us rend our hearts, as we are commanded, that we may preserve these garments entire, in like manner as the Saviour's coat was kept whole. Nor doth the rending of the heart keep the garment whole only, but maketh it also long and flowing, and a coat of many colours, such as from the holy patriarch

¹ Wisd. vii. 22.² Ps. lvii. 8.³ Ps. cxix. 70. D.⁴ Ps. xxxiii. 1.⁵ 1 Pet. iv. 8.

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Jacob the son received who was beloved above the rest.¹ Hence verily perseverance in virtues; hence the parti-coloured unity of a fair conversation; hence that glory of the King's daughter in golden borders, clothed round about with varieties.² This rending of the heart may, however, be also otherwise understood; as, that if it be depraved, it may be rent to compunction; if hardhearted, to compassion. Why should not the ulcer be cut, that the foul matter may run out? Why should not the heart be rent, that it may flow forth with bowels of pity? Useful truly are both rendings, that neither the poison of sin may be concealed in our heart, nor our bowels of mercy be shut against our poor neighbour: that we may ourselves also obtain mercy from our Lord Jesus Christ, who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen.

 II.
(3d for Lent.)

ON THE FAST OF LENT.

I BESEECH you, my most dearly beloved, to enter with the utmost devotion upon this Lenten Fast, which is commended to us, not merely by the abstinence, but much more by the mystery, it involves. For if we have hitherto fasted devoutly, we must yet fast much more devoutly at this holy season. For if any addition be made to the accustomed rule of abstinence, is it not most unworthy that we should find that burdensome which is borne with us by the whole Church? Hitherto we have stood alone, fasting up to the Ninth Hour: now all men alike will fast with us until the Evening, both kings and princes, clergy and people, noble and simple, the rich man and the poor together. I say this, my brethren, lest any should be disturbed through pusillanimity of spirit, and enter upon this present fast with less devotion, from remembering, perhaps, that he had found the burden of the former fasting sufficiently difficult to bear. For after this our adversary strives, to the utmost of his

¹ Gen. xxxvii. 3.² Vid. Ps. xlv. 14, 15.

For Lent.

power, that our holocaust may be robbed of the richness¹ of devotion, that it may be both the less acceptable to God, and our conscience be the less enlivened with spiritual joy: and so out of a pusillanimity of endurance there be also produced a pusillanimity of conscience. Let us, I beseech, watch against him with all our care, as we are not ignorant of his devices; both because God loveth a cheerful giver, and because our own conscience also is exalted by a proportionately larger measure of confidence: that our fasts may be more devout, let us carefully set before our eyes the example of the whole Church.

2. But why speak I of those whom we have as companions in the keeping of this fast? as if we had not therein leaders far more excellent, nay some even that consecrate this observance. With what devotion ought we to undertake that which is handed down, as by an hereditary title,² from holy Moses, to whom, by a special prerogative above other Prophets, the Lord spake face to face?³ With what fervour ought we to embrace that which comes to us commended⁴ by that Elijah who was carried into heaven in a chariot of fire?⁵ For lo! how many thousands have been visited since those days by the general lot of death! and yet Elijah hath, even up to this time, escaped his hands, under the Lord's protection. But if now this present fast be commended to us by Moses and Elias, who, great as they were, yet were but fellow-servants with us; how is it commended by our Lord Jesus, who Himself also fasted a like number of days?⁶ What manner, I say not, of monk, but of Christian, is he who doth not keep this fast with devotion, which Christ Himself hath handed down to him? Lastly, we ought, my best beloved, to imitate with the greater devotion the example of Christ's fasting, in proportion to our certainty that He fasted not for His own sake, but for ours.

3. Let us therefore fast, my most dearly beloved, and fast with devotion, during this holy season of Lent: and so as to bear in mind that this forty days' fast of ours endureth not for forty days only. For our Lent ought to be continued all

¹ pinguedine.² Exod. xxxiv. 28.³ Exod. xxxiii. 11.⁴ 1 Kings xix. 8.⁵ 2 Kings ii. 11.⁶ S. Matt. iv. 2.

the days of this wretched life, during which we are bound to fulfil the Decalogue of the law by the help of grace, which grace is commended to us in the four Gospels. They plainly are in error who imagine that these very few days suffice for penance; whereas it is certain that the whole period of this life was appointed for no other purpose but for repentance. *Seek ye the Lord*, saith the Prophet, not for forty days only, but *while He may be found; call ye upon Him while He is near.*¹ For then will there be no time of calling, when God will be near to none; He will be indeed present but to a part; from the rest, very far distant. Meantime, from His being said to be near, it plainly appears that He is not as yet possessed; but, nevertheless, He may easily be possessed and found. Who seems to you to have been neighbour to him that fell among thieves? He, forsooth, that shewed mercy on him.² Since, therefore, during the whole of this time of mercy, He is near, *seek ye the Lord*, my best beloved, *while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.*

4. But during this present Lent, we must seek Him with greater fervour; for this is not only a portion, but a sacrament of our whole time. Wherefore, if in other days our efforts have perchance in any degree grown tepid, it is fit that they now grow warm afresh in fervour of spirit. If, indeed, the appetite alone have sinned, let it alone fast, and it sufficeth. But if our other members have also sinned, why should not they also fast? Let the eye, therefore, fast, which hath preyed upon the soul; let the ear fast, the tongue fast, the hand fast, yea, let the soul itself fast. Let the eye fast from curious sights, and from all headstrong passion, that, being well humbled, it may be trained in penance, which in its evil freedom hath wandered in sin. Let the evil itching ear fast from vain stories and scandals, and all that is idle, and that pertaineth not to salvation. Let the tongue fast from detraction and murmuring, from useless, vain, and scurrilous words: sometimes, also, in the gravity of silence, from such things as may even appear necessary. Let the hand fast from idle signs, and from all works which are not commanded. But,

¹ Is. lv. 6.² S. Luke x. 36, 37.

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much more, let the soul itself fast from vices, and from its own self-will; for without this fasting, other things are reprobated by the Lord; as it is written,¹ In the day of your fast, your own will is found.

III.

(7th for Lent.)

ON THE PILGRIM—THE DEAD—THE CRUCIFIED.

HAPPY they that comport themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this wicked world, keeping themselves free from its pollutions. *For here we have no abiding city, but we seek one to come.*² Let us keep ourselves from carnal desires, which war against the soul, as strangers and pilgrims. Forasmuch as a pilgrim walks on the king's highway, and turns not aside to the right hand nor to the left. If perchance he see men at strife, he gives no heed; if at a wedding, or dancing, or doing any other thing, he nevertheless passes on, being but a pilgrim, and having no concern in such things. For his native land he sighs, towards his native land he is journeying: having food and raiment, he has no desire to be burdened with other things. Happy verily he, who thus acknowledges his own condition, thus deplores his foreign sojourn, saying to the Lord: *For I am a stranger with Thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.*³ This, indeed, is great; but perhaps there is a yet higher step. For a pilgrim, though he mingle not with the inhabitants, is yet entertained at times at the sight of what is going on, or at the narration of others, or he himself narrates what he has seen: and by these, and such-like things, although he be not wholly kept back, he is yet hindered and detained; whilst he loses somewhat of his remembrance of his native land, and hastens forward with less diligence. For he may also take in those

¹ Vid. Isa. lviii. 3.² Heb. xiii. 14.³ Ps. xxxix. 13.

things so great delight, as to be now not only delayed, and advance less rapidly, but even wholly to take up his abode, and not even slowly reach the place of destination.

2. Who, then, is a greater stranger to the world's doings than a pilgrim? They truly to whom the Apostle says: *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*¹ The pilgrim may, indeed, be easily occupied to excess upon the provisions of his journey; being at once detained in seeking, and oppressed in carrying them. But the dead feels nothing, though he lack even burial. Praise is in his ears like blame, flattery like detraction; or rather he hears nothing, because he is dead. Happy altogether is death, which keeps him thus free from stain; yea, verily, wholly alienates him from this world. But it behoves that, whoso liveth not in himself, should have Christ living in him. For this is that which is spoken by the Apostle: *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*² As if he said: To all other things I am indeed dead,—I feel not, I heed not, I labour not; but what things soever are of Christ, these find me alive and on my watch. For if nothing else is in my power, I can at least feel: I am pleased with what I see to be for His honour; what is otherwise displeases me. This is altogether a great step.

3. But perchance somewhat may be found yet higher. We will inquire, then, in whom. In whom, think you, but in him of whom we just now spoke,—who was carried up even to the third heaven? For who can forbid you to speak of the third heaven, if you can find any step above those we have mentioned? Hear him, then, from this so great elevation, not glorying in himself, but saying: *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.*³ He says not simply “dead to the world,” but *crucified*, which is an ignominious kind of death. I to it, and it likewise to me. All things that the world loves are a cross to me: the delights of the flesh, honours, riches, vain human applause. And what the world esteems a cross, to these things I am fixed, to these

¹ Col. iii. 3.² Gal. ii. 20.³ Gal. vi. 14.

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I cling, these I embrace with my whole heart. Is not this a greater degree than the second and the first? The pilgrim, if he be wise, and not forgetful of his pilgrimage, passes on albeit with labour, and is not greatly involved in secular cares. The dead sets at nought the pleasures of this world equally with its pains. But he that is carried up even to the third heaven feels every thing a cross into which the world enters, and adheres to those things which to the world appear a cross. Although in these words of the Apostle, this meaning also may not unfitly be found—that the world was crucified to him in his esteem thereof, but he to the world by compassion. For he saw the world crucified by the bonds of vices, and he was crucified to it through the affection of compassion.

4. Let us consider at this time, each for himself, in which degree each stands; and do our best to advance day by day, since from strength to strength the God of gods shall be seen in Sion.¹ But especially, I beseech, let us endeavour in this holy time to have our conversation in all purity, when a certain, and that a small number, of days is set out, lest human weakness should fall into despair. For if we were told, “Be careful at all times wholly to keep purity in your conversation,” who would not despair? But now we are admonished in this short number of days to make up for all the neglects of other times: so as even thus to taste the sweetness of perfect purity, and that in all future time the bright vestiges of this holy Lent may shine forth in our conversation. Let us strive, therefore, my brethren, to take this holy time for entire devotion, and now still better refit our spiritual armour. For now our Saviour joins battle with the devil, with the universal army, as it were, of the entire world: happy they that fight stoutly under such a Leader! For through the whole year the warfare is carried on by the king’s household body, which is ever ready girded for battle: but at one set time the universal empire is gathered together in one general army. Happy ye, that have deserved to be of His household, to whom the Apostle speaks, saying: *Now ye are no longer strangers and*

¹ Vid. Ps. lxxxiv. 8.

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*foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.*¹ For what deeds must they perform who have engaged to fight the whole year through, when even recruits, and they who were before idle, are laying hold of spiritual arms? Verily there is especial need for us to stand firmly to our wonted battle, that a great victory may redound to the glory of our King, and to our salvation.

¹ Eph. ii. 19.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. X.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. BERNARD ;

FOR LENT.

(Part V.)

I.

(4th for Lent.)

ON PRAYER AND FASTING.

SEEING that the time of the Lenten Fast has arrived,—which I admonish Your Charity to enter upon with the utmost devotion,—I think it well to set before you, in some measure, with what fruit and in what manner you ought to fast. And first, my brethren, by abstaining even from what is lawful, we obtain pardon for the unlawful acts we have before committed. But what is this pardon of things committed, except it be that by a brief fast eternal fastings be bought off? For we have deserved hell, where there is no food ever, no consolation, no end; where the rich man asks for a drop of water, and to obtain it is not vouchsafed him. Good, therefore, and salutary is fasting, whereby eternal fastings and punishments are redeemed, since thus sins are redeemed. For it works not only the abolition of sins, but the extirpation of vices; not only obtains pardon, but deserves also grace; not only does away the past sins which we have committed, but keeps off also the future which we might commit.

2. Let me also mention one thing more, which you may easily understand, having often experienced it, unless I mistake,—fasting gives fervour and confidence to prayer. And observe how fasting and prayer are united together; as it is written, If the brother helpeth the brother, they shall both be comforted.¹ Prayer obtains strength for fasting, and fasting deserves grace for prayer. Fasting strengthens prayer, prayer sanctifies fasting, and makes an offering of it to the Lord. For what will fasting avail us, if it be left on earth? which far be it from us! Let fasting, then, be raised aloft upon the wing, as it were, of prayer. But lest, perchance, this suffice not, another virtue must needs be joined thereto. The prayer of the just pierceth the clouds, saith the Scripture.² Let, then, our fasting have two wings, that it may straightway pierce the heavens—of prayer, namely, and of justice. Now what is justice, but that which gives every man his own? Wait not, then, upon God, as though He were alone. For thou art a debtor also to those set over thee, and to thy brethren; and God will not have you make light account of those of whom He by no means makes light. For the Apostle saith not without cause, *providing for honest things not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.*³ You say, perhaps; I am satisfied if God alone approves what I do; what care I for human judgment? But be sure, He is but little pleased with whatsoever thou doest to the scandal of His children, and against his will, whom it is your duty to obey as His vicar. *Sanctify a fast*, He saith; *call a solemn assembly.*⁴ Now, what is it to call an assembly? To preserve unity, to seek peace, to love the brotherhood. That proud Pharisee kept his fast, sanctified his fast; for he fasted, forsooth, twice in the week, and gave thanks to God; but he called no assembly; saying, *I am not as other men;*⁵ and so his fast, borne on one wing only, reached not heaven. Do ye, therefore, my most dearly beloved, wash your hands in a sinner's blood;⁶ and be careful, above all things, that your fast have two wings—holiness, namely, and peace, without which no man shall see God.

¹ Vid. Prov. xviii. 19. Vulg.² Vid. Eccclus. xxxv. 17.³ 2 Cor. viii. 21.⁴ Joel i. 14.⁵ S. Luke xviii. 11.⁶ in sanguine peccatoris.

For Lent.

Sanctify your fast, that it may be offered to the Divine Majesty by a pure intention and devout prayer: *call an assembly*, that it may be agreeable to unity: *praise the Lord in cymbals and dancing*, that the mortification of your flesh be not discordant.

3. And now, having said thus much concerning fasting and justice, it is fit that I should also speak some few words besides concerning Prayer. For in proportion as the efficacy of this exercise is greater if it be performed aright, with so much greater craft is it wont to be hindered by the enemy. For at one time prayer is grievously hindered by pusillanimity of spirit and immoderate fear; and this usually happens when a man thinks so much of his own unworthiness, as to fail to turn his eyes towards the Divine benignity. For *deep calleth unto deep*;¹ the abyss of light unto the abyss of darkness; the abyss of mercy to the abyss of misery. For the heart of man is deep and inscrutable. But if my iniquity is great, much greater, O Lord, is Thy pity. And so it is that when my spirit has been disturbed at myself, I call to mind the multitude of Thy mercy, and breathe again in it; and when I enter into my own weaknesses, I refuse to remember Thy justice alone.

4. But as there is danger in prayer being too timid, so, on the other hand, the danger is not less, yea, even greater, if it happen to be rash. Concerning such as pray thus, hear what the Lord saith to the Prophet: *Cry aloud*, He saith, *spare not*; *lift up thy voice like a trumpet*,² &c. He saith, *like a trumpet*, because in a vehement spirit are the rash to be rebuked. For they seek Me who have not yet found themselves. Now this I say, not to take from sinners' confidence in their prayers; but I would have such pray as a people which has wrought sin rather than righteousness. Let them pray for the pardon of their sins with a contrite heart and a spirit of humility, in such manner as that Publican who cried, *God be merciful to me a sinner*.³ For I call it rashness, when one, in whose conscience some sin or fault still reigns, walks in great and marvellous things above his reach, little anxious for the peril of his soul. The third danger is, that prayer be tepid, and proceed not from a lively affection. The timid prayer pierceth

¹ Ps. xlii. 7.² Isa. lviii. 1.³ S. Luke xviii. 13.

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not the clouds, because the heart is restrained by an immoderate fear, so that its prayer cannot possibly—I say not ascend, but even begin to move. But the tepid languishes in its ascent, and fails for sheer lack of vigour. Now the rash ascends, but bounds back, for it meets with resistance; and not only obtains no grace, but even merits offence. But the prayer that is faithful, and humble, and fervent, will no doubt pierce heaven; from whence it is very certain that it cannot return void.

OF THE TRIPLE MANNER OF PRAYER.

(Sermon V.)

THE love with which I am solicitous for you, my brethren, compels me to speak to you: and this would urge me to speak to you much oftener, unless I were hindered by so much business. And no marvel if I be anxious for you, when I find even in myself much matter and occasion of anxiety. For as often as I think of my own misery and manifold perils, my soul doubtless is disturbed within me; and my anxiety is not less for each one of you, seeing that I love you even as myself. He that searcheth the hearts knoweth how often my care for you outweighs in my heart solicitude for myself. And no marvel if my solicitude be great, and a great fear disturb me for you all, when I see you set in so great misery, in so great dangers. For we each, as is evident, bear about our own snare; we carry about with us every where our own domestic foe. I speak of this flesh of ours, born of sin, nourished in sin; corrupt exceedingly in its very origin, but much more polluted by evil custom. Hence lusteth the flesh so fiercely against the Spirit—hence its constant murmurs—hence its impatience of discipline—hence its unlawful suggestions—hence its rebellion against reason, its total rejection of fear.

2. To this that most crafty Serpent lends his aid—this he assists—this he makes use of to attack us; he, whose sole desire, aim, and business it is, to shed the blood of souls. This is he who unceasingly devises evil, who instigates the

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desires of the flesh, who blows the natural fire of concupiscence by a certain sort of poisoned suggestions, who inflames unlawful motions; prepares occasions of sin, and never ceases tempting men's hearts by a thousand injurious arts. This is he who binds our hands each with his own chain; and beats us, as the saying is, with our own staff; so that the flesh which is given for our help becomes our ruin and our snare.

3. But what profits it to point out the dangers, if no consolation be applied—no remedies? The danger, indeed, is great, and grievous the strife against our domestic enemy, especially as we are strangers, and he at home; as he dwells in his own country, we are exiles and foreigners. Great danger is there also in waging conflicts so frequent, yea, so constant, against the crafts of his devilish deceit; whom we cannot see, and who is rendered crafty above measure, not only by the deceitfulness of his nature, but by his long exercise in malice. Yet it lies with us, if we would not be vanquished, to prevent it; and none of us is overthrown in this conflict without his own consent. Thy desire, O man, is made subject to thee, and thou shalt rule over it. The enemy can excite the motion of temptation; but thou hast the power, at thy will, to give or refuse consent. In thy power it is, if thou wilt, to make thine enemy thy slave, that all things may work together for thy good. For see, the enemy inflames the desire of food; he bears in upon thy mind thoughts of vanity or impatience, or excites motions of lust: do thou only give no consent; and as often as thou resistest, thou wilt receive a crown.

4. It is, however, impossible to deny, my brethren, that these things are full of trouble and danger; but if we resist bravely, there springs from a good conscience a certain godly peace even in the very conflict. I even believe that, if, as soon as we perceive these thoughts within us, we suffer them not to remain, but excite our mind against them with a spiritual violence, as the enemy will retire from us confounded, so will he be less willing speedily to return again. But who are we, or what is our strength, that we should be able to resist so many temptations? This it certainly was that God designed, this that He strove to bring us to: that, seeing our

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deficiency, and that we have no other help, we may run with all humility to His mercy. Wherefore I beseech you, my brethren, that ye have ever at hand this most safe refuge of prayer, concerning which I now remember that I spoke a short while ago at the end of my sermon.

5. But as often as I speak concerning prayer, I seem to hear some words of human cogitation in your heart, which I have also often heard from others, and have sometimes experienced in my own heart. For why is it that, although we never cease from prayer, scarcely ever does any one of us seem to experience the fruit of his prayer? As we come to prayer, so we seem to go away. No one answers us a word—no one gives us any thing; but we seem to have laboured in vain. But what saith the Lord in the Gospel? *Judge not, saith He, according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*¹ And what is righteous judgment but the judgment of faith? For the just man liveth by faith. Follow, therefore, the judgment of faith, and not thine own experience; for faith is true, but experience deceitful. What, then, is the truth of faith but what the Son of God Himself promises? *What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*² Let none of you, my brethren, think lightly of his prayer. For I say to you, that He to whom we pray thinks not lightly of it. Before it hath passed out of our mouth, He orders it to be entered in His book. And one of two things we may unhesitatingly hope, that He will either give what we ask, or what He knows to be more useful to us. For we know not what we should ask for as we ought; but He hath pity upon our ignorance; and receives our prayer favourably, and withholds either what is altogether unprofitable for us, or what is necessary should not be granted so soon; and yet our prayer will not be without fruit.

6. Yea, verily, it will not; if we do what we are bidden in the Psalm, if we delight ourselves in the Lord. For holy David saith, *Delight thou in the Lord, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire.*³ But what is this, O Prophet, that thou thus peremptorily commandest? this delighting in the Lord,

¹ S. John vii. 24.² S. John xi. 24.³ Ps. xxxvii. 4.

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as if this kind of delight were ready to our hand? We know what the delight is of food, of sleep, of ease, of other things that are of the earth; but what delight is there in God, that we should delight ourselves in Him? My brethren, the men of the world may say this; but ye cannot. For what one of you is there that hath not often experienced the delight of a good conscience? that hath not tasted the sweet relish of chastity, of humility, of charity? This is not the delight of drink, nor of meat, nor of any such thing; yet it is a delight, and greater than all these; for it is a divine, not a carnal delight. And when we delight in these things, we clearly delight ourselves in the Lord.

7. But, perhaps, many plead that they but rarely experience this affection of delight, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, by reason that they are meantime exercised by temptations: and they act a much more manly part who pursue these virtues with a perfect intention, even if not with perfect affection, not for the delight which they may experience, but for the sake of the virtues themselves, and with the sole view of pleasing God. And there is no doubt that such an one excellently fulfils the Prophet's admonition, when he says, *Delight thou in the Lord*; since he speaks not of the affection, but of the exercise. For the affection comes of blessing, the exercise of virtue. *Delight thou*, saith he, *in the Lord*: tend to this, strive after this, to delight thyself in the Lord, *and He will give thee the desires of thy heart*. But consider that he says, the desires of the heart; those, namely, which the judgment of reason approves. And thou hast no cause to make objections, but rather every cause to return thanks with thy whole heart, when thy God's care over thee is so great, that when thou ignorantly askest what is useless to thee, He hears thee not in that matter, but changes it for a more serviceable gift. Thus an earthly father willingly gives his child bread when he asks; but if he ask for a knife, he does not consent, not thinking it necessary, but breaks the bread he had given him instead, or bids one of the servants break it, that no danger or inconvenience may befall his child.

8. Further, I believe the desires of the heart are three

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in number; and I do not see what any Christian ought to ask for besides these. Two are of this world; that is, the well-being of his body and his soul; the third, the blessing of eternal life. And marvel not when I say that the welfare of the body is to be sought of God; for all things pertaining to the body are His, even as all spiritual goods. From Him, therefore, we must seek and hope for every thing that may serve to sustain us for His service. For the soul's necessities, however, we must pray both more frequently and more fervently; that is, for obtaining God's grace and the virtues of the soul. So, also, for life eternal we must pray with all devotion, with all our desire, for that life, I say, where we may enjoy full and perfect beatitude both of body and soul.

9. That the desires of the heart, then, may be confined to these three things, we must observe three things. For into the first, superfluity is apt to insinuate itself; into the second, impurity;¹ and into the third, an occasional elation. For sometimes men are apt to ask for temporal things for pleasure, virtues for ostentation; and even life eternal some, perhaps, seek without humility, but, as it were, with confidence of their own merits. And this I say, not but that the reception of favour should give confidence in prayer; but it is not fit that any one should base his confidence in asking on this. All that is conferred by these first gifts is this: that from that same mercy which gave these, even greater may be hoped for. Let, then, the prayer which is for temporal things be restricted to mere necessities; let the prayer which thou offerest for the virtues of the soul be also free from all impurity, and intent only upon pleasing God; and that which is for eternal life be in all humility, presuming, as is fit, on nothing, but the Divine mercy.

OF THE LORD'S PRAYER.

(Sermon VI.)

THE Lord's will, my brethren, which first created the Angels by forming them, afterwards blessed them, being formed

¹ i. e. of motive.

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in them. For like as the Word, which was in the beginning, when He took flesh, is said, and truly said, to have been made flesh; so that eternal Will was formed in the Angel, when It wholly absorbed the angelic will into Itself. Why should it not be said to be formed in the Angel, when it is made the angelic will? For this is the sum of that felicity, this the torrent of celestial pleasure, that the Divine Will was made that also of the Angels; that like as God takes pleasure in the entire round of this administration, so they also rejoice in all, delight in all. This, then, is what we pray, that this Will may be done in the creatures of earth, even as it is done in those of heaven; that men, even as Angels, by adhering to God, may become one spirit with Him. But, alas me! how many obstacles separate them! how many impediments hinder! Our malice throws itself in the way between us; our weakness lies in the way, our concupiscence, our ignorance. For there dwells in us, as if of our very nature, but rather from the fall of our nature, a certain most evil affection and lust of mischief; so that there is found in our wretched souls an inextinguishable delight in malice. And what can be farther from the Divine Will? A great gulf is plainly fixed between us and It in this matter; since He ever takes delight in conferring benefits, and we, ungrateful, are, on the contrary, excited by a most curst affection to seek the hurt of those even who have never injured us. Hence buds forth every sort of bitterness; hence envies, detractions, dissensions sprout out; hence branch forth enmities. But these poisonous shoots must needs be ever cut down by the pruning-knife of justice, whereby we force ourselves not to do to another what we would not have done to us; but what we would that men should do to us, do the same to them. Malice, however, cannot be wholly eradicated or extirpated out of our hearts whilst we are in this world, which lieth wholly in the wicked one. The serpent's head is indeed bruised, but it is often our lot to experience his plots against our heel.

2. We are hindered, also, in the second place, by the very weakness of this corruptible body, so that our will cannot adhere to the Divine Will. For it is impossible that we should not feel distaste at the difficulties we experience; and herein

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our will is frequently opposed to the Divine Will; and that it become not wholly adverse to It, we have need of fortitude, which is the second kind of virtue.

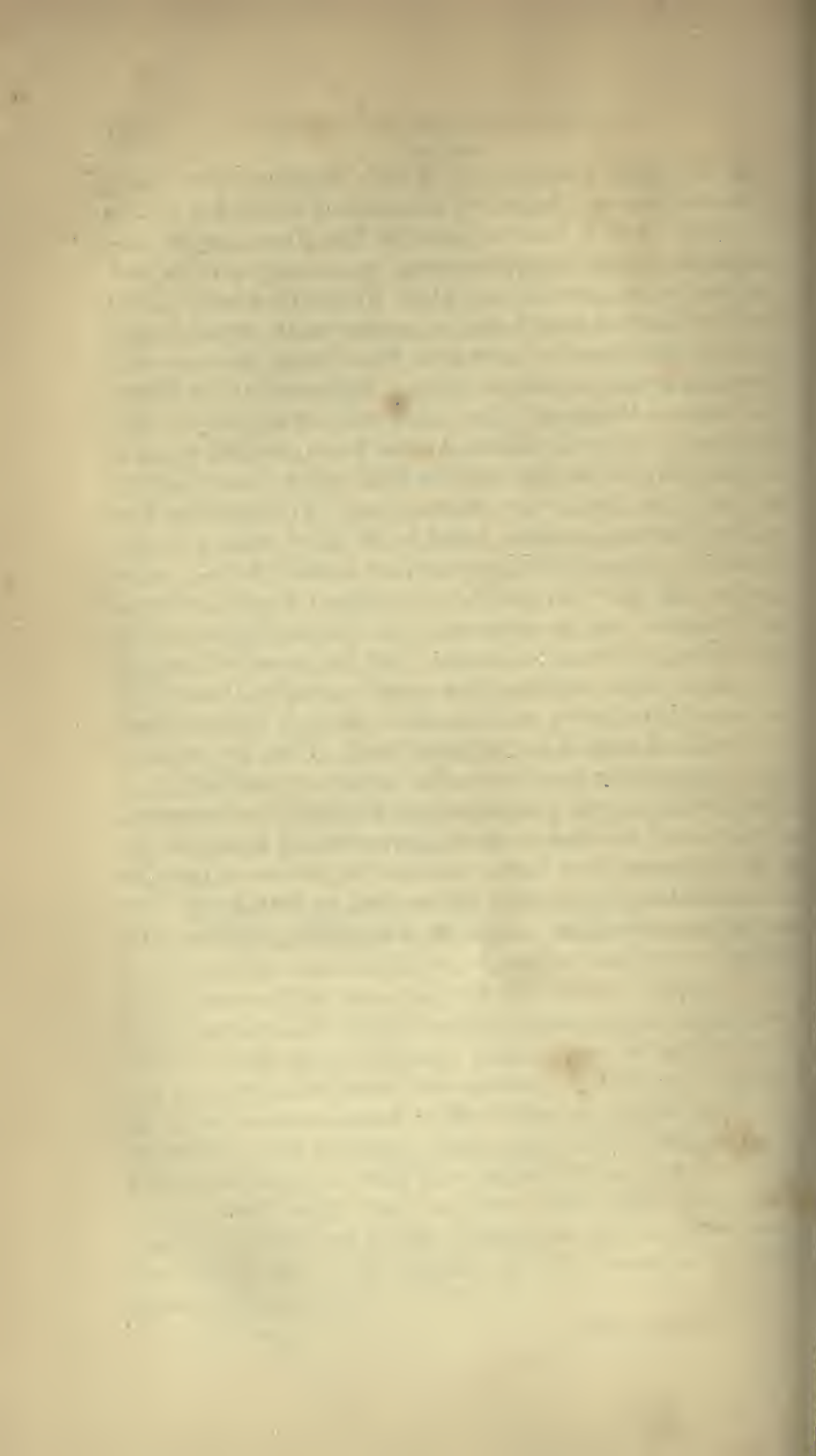
3. Nor is the distress of the body our only hinderance: we are hindered also by concupiscence, by which we are drawn aside by multiplied and insatiable desires. For when shall our tortuous and rugged will be able to unite itself to that Will which is most upright, and in no way whatsoever distorted? Alas me! O Lord God! for wars are about me on every side, on every side darts are flying, on every side dangers, on every side hinderances! Wheresoever I turn me, there is nowhere safety. I fear both what is soothing and what is painful; both hunger and refreshment; both sleep and vigils; both labour and rest fight against me. *Give me neither poverty nor riches,*¹ is the prayer of the Wise man; for verily each hath its snare, each its danger. But if concupiscence is restrained by temperance (since this is the only remedy in such a case), there will indeed be some union, but it will not be complete. Hence even the Apostle confesses concerning himself, *With the mind I myself, saith he, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin, which is in my members.*² Partly, then, he adheres, partly dissents, until that which is perfect is come, and that which is in part is done away.

4. Fourth is ignorance, which how very great a hinderance it proves to us, you are well aware. For how can I follow the will of God when it leads me on, where I am ignorant of it? But I know only in part, and not yet as I am known. We must therefore seek with all our desire the increase of wisdom, that God may more and more make known to us His Will, that we may know what is acceptable to Him at all times. So, by the consummation of the virtues of justice, fortitude, temperance, and prudence, that union will be fulfilled which is not more happy in itself than desirable by us,—that we may have one will with God, and that what things soever are pleasing to Him may be also pleasing to us; and then (as I have before said of the Angels) will this sweetness be altogether perfected in us.

¹ Prov. xxx. 8.² Vid. Rom. vii. 25.

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5. We pray also that the Lord's Kingdom may come, to the end we may have full assurance of the power of His Kingdom. And in that we pray that His Name may be hallowed, we thereby altogether desire to advance even beyond ourselves in the knowledge of Him. For verily when we shall have in ourselves both a happy security and a secure happiness, we shall then be borne unto Him that is above us with the entire vehemency of our spirit. *Hallowed be Thy Name.* His Name is His glory. And this when is it not holy? Yet His glory is said to be hallowed when He is glorified by us in holiness; even as we ask that His Will, which is eternal, may be done in us, that it may become ours. We therefore first ask that this may be done, which is the chief point, that the undefiled holiness of His glory may be revealed to us. After this we pray for what relates to ourselves; for the power of His Kingdom, for security's sake; for the perfection of His Will in us, for sweetness' sake. But by reason of our not yet enjoying that perfection, we cannot obey the Divine Will without great labour: we have need of food, that we faint not; we have need, I say, of daily bread. Since also we very often wander from it, and do amiss, in that we abandon it, we have need to pray for pardon, saying, *Forgive us our trespasses*, and the rest. But lest we should perchance fall again into the same trespasses, after having received the pardon of our sins, we must also pray to Him not to lead us into temptation, but rather to lead us out of it, and deliver us from evil. Amen.



Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. XI.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF THOMAS À KEMPIS;
ON THE PASSION OF OUR LORD.

I.

(Sermon for Passion Sunday.)

OF LAMENTATION OVER THE LORD'S PASSION.

*O all ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow
like unto My sorrow.¹*

HOLY Church now celebrates the memory of the Lord's Passion; and worthy is it that her children should suffer with their Lord, who vouchsafed for them to die in the body, that they in body and soul together might live eternally. Let them not be ungrateful, or count themselves as strangers; but piously bear in mind that they are the Church and Spouse of Christ, who are called sons; if, that is, with filial love, and single-hearted devotion of faith, they adhere to Christ. O wondrous charity of the Supreme Father! O wondrous love of the Only Begotten Son of God! O wondrous benignity of the Holy Spirit, that hath abounded and overflowed upon the whole race of man! What sayest thou to this, O my soul? Wilt thou be ungrateful, or canst thou be unmindful of so great charity? How canst thou neglect Him, by whom thou hast been so diligently sought? How canst thou do otherwise than repay

¹ Lam. i. 12.

Him with love, who hath loved thee so ardently? Love Him who loveth thee, and loveth thee so strongly, that He chose to undergo death, rather than that thou shouldest perish. This was that love, than which none hath had greater, and therefore hath He made full satisfaction for all.

2. But what wilt thou do? and what give unto the Lord in return for His death? Somewhat thou oughtest to do, although a worthy return thou canst not make. For unable is the whole creation, unable are all the Saints, to repay worthy thanks to God for His death, which He of His own will undertook for thee. Remember, therefore, His sacred Passion, and study after thy measure to imitate it; for to be willing cheerfully to bear tribulations for Him is to render Him great thanks. Withdraw thy mind, therefore, from exterior cares; and turn all thy thoughts upon the image of thy Crucified Lord. For through Him shalt thou be enabled to exclude from thy mind strange images; yea, and by the impression of this sacred image, to bear with greater meekness any pains soever of the body. And, because now, in order of the seasons of the Church, it is fit to meditate on the Lord's Passion, thou oughtest to direct thy exercises towards it with the greater earnestness. If the preceding days of the fast have gone by too negligently, now at least during this Fortnight, for the sake of Christ's Passion, let new devotion reanimate thee. And if thou recollect that thou hast done ought well, improve upon thy former deeds. Be more earnest now, and more fervent; for this is required by the special memory of the Lord's Passion, and by the general compassion which the Church takes up for the death of her Redeemer.

3. Let it not be onerous to thee, nor tedious to go through in thought the bitter Passion of Christ, which He was prepared to sustain for thee. On each of these days do thou gather and take with thee *a bundle of myrrh*¹ from the vineyard of the Lord of Sabaoth, which thou mayest hide *betwixt thy breasts*, as a preserver of thine heart, for from it exhales the odour of life; and if thou bruise it well with thy teeth, thou shalt find therein wondrous support under adversities and reproaches. For many have tasted and seen, that by often

¹ Vid. Cant. i. 13.

exercising themselves in the Passion of the Saviour, His sacred Stripes and blessed Wounds have relished so sweetly, that, from the vehemence of their grief, they were dissolved in tears; and by reason of the excessive longing of their love and compassion, they were strongly inflamed, even to the bearing of contumelies and punishments for the love of Christ. Why should I tell how some, carried out of themselves, and entirely transformed from self-love, desired to enter within the inmost secrets of JESUS, that they might gain a sense of His emptying Himself, even to the death of the Cross; desiring to suffer humiliation even to the depth of their heart, and to be disesteemed by all creatures, that Christ alone might be magnified in their hearts, and themselves merely despised?

4. Such fire is there in the Blood of Christ, which was shed from love, that it makes him who meditates intimately upon it burn with strong ardour; and so far forget himself, as to take contempt for joy; and to esteem those things which punish the body as of the least possible moment. For thus the earnest lover begins by suffering to grow to the likeness of the beloved Object who returns his love: whilst he gives himself entirely and freely to Him, who, that He might redeem him, spared Himself in nothing. Hence arises boundless affection, and sweetest consolation is received; singular devotion shoots forth, carnal affection dies, the spirit is elevated in God; the intellect is illumined, and the word of the Prophet is tasted, who says, And my chalice, which inebriateth me, how goodly is it!¹ But because this is very great and arduous, nor accessible to any by himself, therefore do thou seek, ask, and knock, O my soul, that the most loving JESUS, full of the Holy Ghost and power, rich unto all who call upon Him, may here mercifully open to thee that sovereign treasure which He hath hidden within Himself, and cause the most precious unguent of devotion to flow upon thee from His sacred Wounds; that thou also mayest learn to *suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock*;² which is hidden from the proud, but is opened to humble and devout hearts; veiled to the carnal and those who savour of earthly things, but a taste of which is often granted to the pure and simple. Such is the

¹ Vid. Ps. xxiii. 5.² Deut. xxxii. 13.

wondrous dispensation of God, that the meek and humble receive that of which the proud and curious are incapable.

5. Thou seest, how many read much, search deeply, and seek what is high; but they have little or almost no devotion towards Christ's Passion; because they spend themselves upon exterior objects, and seek their consolation in the earthly; and therefore their inward heart becomes dry and void of wisdom, and they cannot think those things that are of JESUS Christ. They are busied about many things, and are edified in few. They neglect the useful, omit the necessary; they love the subtle, despise the simple; are hurried here and there, and search into all that is new; and not even so do they find rest, nor are they satisfied with what they hear; for so long as they seek not JESUS by His Passion and Cross, they can by no means attain to true internal sweetness, and the knowledge of His Deity. For JESUS alone affords, through His most sacred Humanity, an access to His Divinity. Which Saint Paul well understood, when he said, *For in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:*¹ and therefore, putting aside the words of worldly wisdom, he exercised himself in the Life and Passion of Christ, saying, *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*²

6. Attend thou to this, O my soul; and laying aside anxious thoughts and all vanities, fix the interior eye of thine heart upon JESUS crucified. From this time keep anxious vigils; and, with JESUS on Mount Olivet, pray the Father, that as to Him was given the chalice of the blessed Passion to drink, even so to thee also may be given ardent affection, as a lover to suffer with Him. For thou shalt find more in the Wounds of JESUS Christ, than in the possession of the whole world. And the single sight of Christ's Passion will overwhelm thy soul with greater amazement than the contemplation of all created things. This, therefore, I say, that thou be transported with greater fervours towards Christ's Passion, and that thou learn thence to meditate thereon more earnestly; yea, that thou allow no day nor hour to pass without calling it to mind. For whatever thou readest or hearest elsewhere

¹ Col. ii. 3.² 1 Cor. ii. 2.

in the words or acts of the Saints, thou shalt find in much more plentiful abundance, and with keener relish, in the Life and Passion of Christ. For truly the adorable Passion of Christ excels all the passions of the Saints in many ways; for the passions of all the Saints are sanctified by Christ's Passion alone, and are rendered acceptable and meritorious by nothing but His Death. For He is the Saint of Saints, who hath the power of forgiving men their sins; who renders all their good works pleasing; and gave Himself for a sacred Offering to God, for the redemption of all transgressions.

7. But in three special ways does Christ's Passion far excel the passions of His Elect; that is, in dignity, and sharpness of suffering, and in its fruit or profit. In dignity, the Person of the Sufferer is conspicuous, for He was the Son of God. In sharpness of suffering is to be considered the exceeding grievous wounding of His Body, for It was of a most noble and sensitive complexion. In respect of its fruit; it displayed the Redemption of mankind; for by His Death, which He endured though free from sin, He freed us from everlasting death, and merited for us an entrance into the glory of celestial bliss. And therefore, by His Prophet, He thus moves all His faithful to consider the greatness of His sorrow, saying, *O all ye that pass by, behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.*¹

8. Alas, alas, O Lord, how many pass heedlessly by before Thy Face! how many pass by Thine image with tearless eyes and uncompassionating heart! Scarcely and from afar looking upon Thee the Crucified, they hurry through the churches without reverence and without genuflexion. They hasten rather to go out than to come in; they had rather idly talk than pray; with more pleasure are they attracted by the world to the market, than by divine and heavenly psalmody to the choir. Hardly can they, even for a short time, continue in Thy praise; whilst Thou, during a long space of hours, didst hang for their salvation upon the Cross, filled with a load of anguish and reproach! Where are our eyes, O Lord, and our ears whither have we turned, that we do not give heed to Thee? Turn Thou us to Thyself; for very quickly do we turn away from Thee. Quickly do we forget Thy great

¹ Lam. i. 12.

charity, which Thou didst manifest to us in Thy blessed Passion. So great things hast Thou suffered, so grievous, so unworthy, and that without any offence of Thine, at the hands of men, yet for men whom Thou hadst Thyself created; at the hands of Thine own nation and people, upon whom Thou hadst bestowed so many benefits in the days of old, and at the self-same time; and we still remain obdurate, and whilst the senseless elements were moved at Thy Death, no movement of compassion is there in the hearts of the children of men.

9. Woe is me, wretched and unhappy that I am, for the barrenness and insensibility of my heart; that I am so quickly affected by a slight injury to myself, and that at such great contumelies against my Lord JESUS Christ I am not moved at all! I am alive to a slight hurt of my body, and the most grievous pains of my Lord I do not weigh. What scanty charity is here! the Head is sorely wounded, and the heart feels no pain. If thou be the Head, and we the members, why do I not suffer with Thee? and why is not my heart rent with grief? My Lord, what answer shall I make to this? and, wretch that I am, what shall I do? Why am I more quickly moved at times towards a mortal man than towards Thee my Creator, my Immortal Spouse? Why does the curious regard of vain objects excite me more powerfully than Thy suspension for me upon the Cross? For this it is that I grieve earnestly, because such things do not penetrate more deeply into my heart, nor wound me at every point as they rightly ought. Shame upon me, that I am so prone to laughter, so alive to my own loss, and so slow and dry in mourning the most bitter Passion of my Lord! But if at any time I put on compassion, too quickly again do I lay it aside; therefore is it that I make no progress, nor attain perfectly to an interior relish. Alas, my God, that I hear so great good of Thee, and do nothing worthily! I read of Thy having gone through such grievous suffering, and I still feel myself more obdurate than melted. No sign is this of perfect love, nor token of the compassion of a lover. How long shall I continue insensible, and refuse to suffer with Thee in Thy sufferings?

10. O now most dear and faithful JESU, pale and hanging upon the Cross, sole Hope of my widowed soul, grant me in

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this holy season worthily to celebrate the memory of Thy Passion, and, by loving compassion, to gain an entrance into Thine open Wounds: where, forgetting myself, and remembering Thy sorrow only, I may never more faint in any tribulation, but freely resign myself to Thy Will! How can I know or judge that I love Thee, save by suffering tribulations for Thy Name? For to suffer willingly from love, and to be able to bear every weight without complaint, is a more costly return than man can make to Thee. For herein are seen the true lovers of the Cross; namely, in their voluntary endurance of every grievous woe. And although Thou be now impassible, and subject to no sufferings, but crowned with glory and honour, and exalted above all the Heavens, yet it is profitable to me, and very pleasant, in my own sufferings to call to mind Thy blessed Passion; for I regard Thee as still exposed to suffering in the flesh; taken and bound, stript of Thy vesture, mocked, spit upon, buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to the Cross, given gall and vinegar to drink, pierced with a lance, condemned with thieves, slandered, blasphemed, despised, deserted, rejected of all; and at length dead upon the Cross, and buried with lamentations. I ought not to pass by even a single point; but from the plentiful harvest of the Gospels, I will faithfully gather together all Thy words and deeds; and not only will I consider Thy wondrous works, but with much more jealous love, meditating well upon all Thy sufferings and reproaches, will I embrace them; for more necessary are such to my safety.

11. Thy miracles, O glorious JESU, instruct me in faith and veneration towards Thy Holy Name; but Thy reproaches and cruel stripes, which Thou hast undergone for me, provoke and inflame me more to loving endurance, to humility, and perfect charity. But he ought greatly to beware who adores only Thy miracles, and considers only what is great in Thee; lest from the consideration of Thine ignominious Death he take offence. Admirable indeed art Thou in Thy works, wrought by Thy divine power, and for these worthy to be praised above all! But Thou didst not disdain to bear patiently such indignities and revilings, and therefore oughtest Thou to be all the more dearly loved.

12. Consider this, therefore, O faithful soul, and be grateful to God for all these things. Thou oughtest to find comfort under all thine anguish and tribulation, in the poor and lowly JESUS, who was forsaken of God and men in the hour of His greatest need. Thou art not above thy Lord, thou idle and unprofitable servant; Christian, thou art not more innocent than Christ. If He endured so much for thee, what wilt thou do for thyself, and what worthy return wilt thou make to Him? If He was even thus forsaken, and given over to contempt, who was the Well-beloved Son, why dost thou take it ill, if thou art sometimes forsaken and despised, who art so unworthy a servant? Look on thy heavenly Pattern, thine everlasting Memorial. O beauteous and most dearly loved JESU, Son of God, which shall I chiefly admire in Thee? the high or the low? And which shall I the rather note? the worthy or the unworthy? But both together were better and truer. Fair and lofty do I behold Thee in Thy divine nature; but marred and despised in Thy human form. In the one, Thou abidest ever; the other, Thou didst suffer for a time. Moreover, to my spirit Thou art fair within and lovely, pure and unsullied; for Thou art a stranger to all transgression, although externally Thou appear greatly disfigured and full of wounds. For my sins wast Thou blackened, and stricken, and crucified.

13. The carnal eyes of the foolish and proud haply are offended; not so those of Thy lovers and of affectionate souls; but they the rather suffer more with Thee and mourn, who love Thee in truth. With such I desire to live, who, loving Thee with their whole heart, follow Thee even to the ignominy of the Cross. No offence art Thou to me, but my greatest honour and joy. For Thy lack of comeliness is my beauty; Thy Stripes and each single Wound, the Health of my soul; Thy Death, my Life. In these I live, and in such is the life of my spirit. Thou wilt rebuke me, *if I do not remember Thee, if I make not Thy Passion the beginning of my joy.*¹ For I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God,² who wast willing to suffer these things; and I believe that for my sins Thou didst willingly endure them.

¹ Vid. Ps. cxxxvii. 6, 7.

² S. Mark i. 24.

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14. I mourn, therefore, and will mourn day and night; and my tears shall be on my cheeks, by reason of my contrition and the bitter Passion of my Lord. David lamented with great lamentation over Saul, and Jonathan his son;¹ and shall I not lament the Death of my Lord and my King? When Jacob saw his son Joseph's coat, he rent his clothes with weeping;² and shall I be able to cease from weeping when I think upon the sad Death of my Lord? Joseph also, when he saw his brother *Benjamin, his mother's son*, immediately *his bowels did yearn* upon him, and *he made haste and wept*,³ for he could not refrain from tears; and do I, on hearing that my Lord has been cruelly slain, pray without tears? Let no one persuade me so, let no one restrain me from grief and lamentation, otherwise he will torment me more. My Lord hath shed for me His precious Blood; and shall I not pour forth for Him my sorry lamentation? Would that I could so lament, that I might also be able to move all men to mourn with me! All cannot weep; but the devout soul is fain, from inward compassion, to lament for her Lord, not to gratify her own will, but to merit a larger portion of His grace.

15. O love of my inmost soul, beloved JESU, Splendour of Eternal Glory, how strange a setting is Thine, Thou Sun of Righteousness! O may my soul suffer with Thee, and the hardness of my heart be rent with the strong affection of my compassion! may it be occupied to-day in solemn thought upon the memory of Thy Passion! In the spirit of humility, and with a contrite heart, may it faithfully wait on Thee, and accompany Thee through every scene of Thy Passion, and attend in sorrow upon every station of Thy Suffering! may it also ardently desire to suffer with Thee, and to die with Thee, pondering on what David said of his son Absalom, Who would grant me that I might die for thee, Absalom my son, my son Absalom?⁴ In David loving affection so prevailed at the thought of the death of his son, though bent on his destruction, that he earnestly bewailed his death, and desired to die in his place who was endeavouring to take away his life: how much more ought the sorrow of exceeding compassion

¹ 2 Sam. i. 17.² Gen. xxxvii. 34.³ Gen. xliii. 29.⁴ Vid. 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

to prevail in me at the thought of Thy innocent Death, consummated for me upon the Cross! More concerned ought I to be that Thou wast crucified and didst die for me, than if the whole world had been given me, yea, lavished upon me.

16. Let my soul, therefore, die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like my Lord.¹ Grant me, Lord, a happy hour of death, and to find a blessed rest with Thee. It will be more happy for me to die at once with Thee, than to live a single hour longer without Thee. Which if Thou refuse me, I will do what devout affection is ever wont to do. I will seek some secret spot, that there I may more freely mourn. I will call to mind Thy Death, O Lord, and I will kiss again and again with the lips of my inmost heart the scars of all Thy Wounds. Let none speak to me to-day, let none trouble himself to provide me with any comfort, or suggest any thought in the way of alleviation; for I will receive no comfort from any creature, lest it hinder me from mourning the most bitter Passion of my Lord. Away, away from me, be ye familiars or strangers; leave me to myself to sit lonely and desolate, that I may mourn for a little while my Beloved, who is crucified for me. Let the fount of tears fail in my head for grief, and let there be none to wipe them away, nor to give me comfort, save Him for whom I mourn. Weep with me, sun and moon; and bewail with me, all creatures; for our Lord is slain to-day. And meet it is, that all things should be in mourning when the Author of nature is suffering; and that all should be clad in sorrow, when the Son of God is enduring so great misery. I care no longer to speak; I care only to weep; for my God, crying with a loud voice, is giving up the ghost. Pour on, pour on, most copious tears, run on even till your source be dry. Fall upon the slain Body of my Lord, and merit for me the interior vision of the heart, that I may deserve hereafter to see Him in His joy, whom, with loving sorrow, I now mourn crucified. May His Sepulchre be to me a place of peace and rest; that His glorious Resurrection may prove the end of all grief and mourning! Amen.

¹ Vid. Numb. xxiii. 10.

II.

(2d for the Passion.)

ON THE CROSS OF JESUS, WHICH HE CARRIED FOR US.

*And they took Jesus, and led Him away; and He, bearing His Cross, went forth to that place which is called Calvary.*¹

I WOULD fain consider this sorrowful passage of the Lord, and with the loving eye of the soul look upon this so piteous sight. Behold, the innocent JESUS, bending under the heavy burden of the Cross, is led out between two thieves, and, woe is me! is dragged with shouts to the public gibbet. He embraces Himself the ignominious Tree with the arms of His charity; He places under it His back torn with scourges, His sacred shoulder, yea, all the feeble limbs of His Body. He carries a burden unmerited, He wears a yoke unwonted; He bears it to the place appointed Him, to the end it may bring forth the fruit of our salvation, against the poison of eternal death.

2. A great subject of mockery, forsooth, to the impious, but a sacred Mystery to all the faithful! To the wicked it is a testimony of perdition, for they crucify the Innocent; to the good, a token of salvation, for they suffer with Him and mourn. The laughter of those shall be turned to mourning; the groaning of these to joy. Behold, then, the gentle Lord proceeds along the way of confusion, with wondrous gentleness. He goes forth by His own will beyond the gate of Jerusalem, over which He wept on the Day of Palms. He bears patiently the derision of His own shameful death, inflicted upon Him by His own nation. He replies not, albeit assailed with injuries, nor resists, though urged on from behind with savage goadings. He summons not Angels to His aid, nor seeks the succour of His friends; but proceeds without lingering, promptly obeying His malicious persecutors. Alone He bears His most grievous burden; alone He suffers the disgrace of the confusion: but not alone will He have the joy of the

¹ Vid. S. John xix. 17.

honour; for He desires to give the merit of His Passion to all who believe on Him. He is not drawn back from the road of the Cross by the affection of His Mother, nor hindered by the lamentations of His friends; He is not disquieted by the tumultuous crowds that meet Him; nor moved by the savage yells of His malignant enemies; He is not stayed by fatigue of body from the work on which He has entered, nor overwhelmed by the storms of persecution. Unchangeably constant, He continues ever One and the Same; freely, and with a quiet heart, He advances to the agony of punishment; even as He lightly esteems the glory of the world, so also bearing its ignominy unmoved; ever continuing in the Eternal Father's praise, excluding none from His charity; but desiring with ardent desire to fulfil the commandment of His Father, which was ordained from everlasting, and to consummate by His Passion and Cross, the work of human restoration imposed upon Him.

3. Now sheweth He, by this signal example, that saving truth which He taught before by word: *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*¹ Lo, thou hast a forerunner along that rugged way, JESUS, the Son of God, the Guide and Teacher of the Gentiles, that He may make them free. Follow thou thy Lord, then, faithful servant; disciple, follow Thy Master; frail member, imitate thy illustrious Head, that, with Him for thy Guide, thou mayest attain to the Kingdom of eternal bliss. Desirest thou prosperous and pleasant days? dread not adversity. Follow, O sinner, the Just One; O man, follow thy God; O creature, thy Creator; O exile, thy Redeemer. Cast away earthly fear, put on fortitude; strive as a good soldier, vanquishing thy nature. By the Cross is the road to salvation: by punishment must we reach our crown. Blush not at Christ's ignominy, if thou wouldest contemplate Christ's Face in glory. For thee He carries this Cross; for thee He undergoes the Death of the Cross. He gives thee the example of endurance; He smooths with His feet the rugged way; He shews that we must not flee, but embrace the ignominy of the Cross. The lowly JESUS carries His Cross for the wicked, that He may make them holy; He suffers pains for vile slaves, that He may

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 24.

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make them heirs with Him of His Kingdom. Who would not desire now to endure the reviling and contempt of men, when the innocent Christ underwent from men such grievous and unworthy treatment, though free from blame? For the soldier bears more easily what he sees his King doing. Therefore the noble King, the King of kings, the Lord of all, went up to battle against the Prince of the world, not covered with a shield, nor defended by a sword, but armed and fenced with the Cross, to be nailed to the Cross, finally to die for His friends upon the Cross. Coming, therefore, to the place of Calvary, with the Standard of the Cross, He chose there to erect the title of His Name, and to work the Mystery of our Salvation; foreknowing that that place which was given over to confusion should be made glorious by His wondrous miracles, and that the gibbet of His Cross should be turned to honour, and, within a short time, preached throughout the world, the object of adoration to the kings and princes of the earth.

4. Venerable truly is the ensign of the Cross in the Christian warfare, a beauteous distinction; a defence singular, and above all kinds of arms; an impenetrable shield against the fierceness and terror of the devil! There it was, then, that JESUS, the Standard-bearer of the Cross, Prince and Patron of all Cross-bearers, stood in the midst of that frightful and noisome stench; which, by reason of the dead-bodies of the slain, was most loathsome and unclean. There He is presently stripped of His garments, and His naked flesh exposed: He went up, and prayed for those who were crucifying Him. There the Omnipotent, as though He were quite powerless, permitted Himself to be extended in figure of the Cross, to be nailed to it, to be pierced with a lance, and to be mocked by His malicious foes. There, deprived of all human comfort, He bequeathed the model of perfect self-renunciation, and example of outward poverty. There, by the touch of His sacred Flesh, He consecrated the Tree of Life; and, by the effusion of His precious Blood, dedicated the Altar of the Cross. There He consummated all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, figurative of His Passion; and offered Himself a Sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to His Father, for the salvation of the world. There He terminated His life, in a happy conflict, by obe-

dience on the Cross; death He conquered by dying, and opened the gate of Paradise; and carried with Him the thief, penitent at the last, into the promised joys.

5. Seeing, then, that JESUS, who was without sin, carried His Cross upon His own shoulders, do thou too carry thy cross; for thou hast grievously and often sinned, and justly merited eternal punishment. To feeble minds the way of the Cross seems to be bitter and grievous; but its end is joyful and rich in fruit, and to its lovers sweet and healthful. Is it not better to pass now a mournful and laborious life for Christ, and to suffer with the Crucified, than, after the scanty joy of a corruptible life, to suffer eternal torments with the devil in hell? For thou shalt be so much the more acceptable to God, and worthy of greater glory in the celestial Kingdom, in proportion as thou shalt have endured now for the Name of JESUS more grievous toil and sorrow: not looking to temporal consolations, but to Christ's Passion, and the rugged ways of the Saints, who have passed through many a tribulation. Every temporal punishment and injury with which we are assailed passes quickly like a shadow; but in heaven abides for ever the glory of the reward, which, Christ willing, shall be paid thee at the last for thy good patience. Strive, therefore, to keep the way of the Holy Cross, and to carry in thy heart the dolorous Image of JESUS Crucified; and with manly courage to imitate Him after thy power in thy frail body. Cheerfully resign thyself, and commit with confidence all that is thine to His divine Will, who has done and endured so great things for thy salvation. For never shalt thou be able to render Him worthy thanks for the least tittle of His Passion, even though thou wert able to endure the sufferings and labours of all the holy Martyrs. But, alas! that thou followest with such tepidity the Lord's Cross; that thou dost not more earnestly compassionate the pains of Christ; that thou servest Him not more fervently, nor returnest Him thanks without ceasing; who regarded thee as so dear, and so loved thee above His other creatures, that He refused not to die for thee, but by His innocent Death freed thee from eternal death! For thou wouldest have been eternally condemned, had not Christ been crucified, and died for thee. For who could make satisfaction

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for all the sins of men, save JESUS Christ, the Son of God, the Immaculate Lamb?

III.

(3d for the Passion.)

OF THE MERIT OF THE LORD'S PASSION, AND OF THE DIGNITY
OF THE HOLY CROSS.

But it behoveth us to glory in the Cross of our Lord JESUS Christ, in whom is our safety, and life, and resurrection.¹

THESE words are read and sung in Holy Church, concerning the Holy Cross, and in them is commended the merit of the Lord's Passion, which is most worthily preferred before all the sacrifices of the Law, and all the labours and virtues of the Saints. For in the Passion and Cross of Christ, our true safety, and the redemption of mankind, most fully consist; for thereby Christ redeemed us, and made satisfaction to God the Father for our sins; and opened Paradise to us, having conquered death. This is clearly seen in the case of the thief who hung on the cross, to whom it was said, *To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*² O wondrous clemency of God! O most sweet rejoinder! O saving benediction of the Cross, which absolved the thief from all guilt, and introduced him first amongst Christians into Paradise!

2. Let all the faithful, therefore, give thanks to Christ, signed as they are with the Sign of the Cross, washed and cleansed in the Blood of Christ; redeemed by the Passion of Christ, made alive by the Death of Christ, healed by the Wounds of Christ, soothed by the pains of Christ, ennobled by the reproaches of Christ. Let all, let each repeat, with devout heart and harmonious voice, to the honour of the Crucified, to the confusion of the devil, to the exaltation of the Holy Cross, to the attaining of the hope of eternal salvation, to the holding fast a firm confidence in the hour of death; let them repeat, read, sing, resound, think and meditate on those words most

¹ Vid. Galat. vi. 14.² S. Luke xxiii. 43.

sweet, most truly full of all sanctity, and most prevailing above all incense in the sight of God: 'It behoveth us to glory in the Cross of our Lord JESUS Christ.'

3. Happy soul, whose heart is penetrated by Christ's most bitter Passion; which exerciseth herself therein day by day, in meditation, reading, and prayer! Blessed she, that taketh up her Cross, renouncing all earthly things; and whatsoever adversity, either from without or from within, befall her, beareth it all patiently for Christ, and is silent! For this it is to glory in the Cross, for Christ's sake; to rejoice in tribulation; to abstain from the pleasures of the flesh, to flee honours, to relinquish our own will, and humbly to obey even to death. To do this is to imitate Christ by His Cross, and truly to love Him. For herein Christ perceives who are His, and who love Him most, if any strive, not by meditation only, but by daily mortification, to conform himself to His Passion.

4. And who is sufficient for these things? Think you that any will be found ready to take up his cross? A great and profound Mystery is the saying of the Cross, which all cannot receive; yea, very many abhor and flee the Cross; and yet this it is which leads to life eternal. O truly blessed Cross, what sweetness dost thou contain, what wondrous efficacy dost thou supply, against all the weariness which comes of vice, and against all sorrow of heart! O Tree of Life, precious, beautiful, health-bearing, and blessed above all the trees of Paradise; to be honoured by Angels, to be adored by men, to be kissed by devout lips, and embraced with outstretched arms! For thy sake have we been made free, and reconciled to God; we, who were by nature children of wrath and condemned slaves. For thy sake came joy into the world, whilst sorrow and mourning were consigned to hell. The salvation art thou of the faithful, the glory of Apostles, the shield of Martyrs, the praise of Confessors; the crown of Virgins, the solace of Widows; the strength of the aged, the discipline of the young; mirror of the religious, refuge of the afflicted.

5. O Cross, resplendent above the stars, more beautiful than the moon, brighter than the sun, illumining the heavens, penetrating the depths of hell, putting demons to flight; shielding men, terrifying the bad, rejoicing the good; casting down

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the proud, exalting the lowly! O glorious Cross, wondrous sign, standard invincible, shield impenetrable! O sweet Wood, worthy of all honour! Thou didst carry the King of Heaven; thou didst support within thine arms the dying Son of God. For thy sake do we hold in honour and reverence every sign of the Cross, of whatever material it be made, and in whatever place set up. Before thee are bowed kings and princes, lord and mistress, man-servant and maid-servant, rich and poor, monk and cleric, master and disciple; every age, every sex of the faithful adores, praises, and blesses thee for Christ's sake, who hung upon thee, and redeemed all.

6. O blessed Cross! for with thy Sign all the Sacraments of the Church are blessed, Priests are consecrated, the sick are anointed, the dead are guarded, images are carved, walls are painted, altars are adorned.

7. O Cross most beauteous, consecrated by the Body of Christ, and graced with His members as with pearls; reddened with His roseate Blood, transfixed with nails, fixed deep into the earth. Thou expandest thy horns through the four regions of the world, drawing to thee and embracing all things that are in heaven and earth.

8. O Cross most noble, above all kinds of arms most powerful, conquering the world and devils, scared by no punishment of death! Thou, in every anguish and distress, in life as in death, art our most sure help and singular consolation.

9. O Cross most amiable, the pre-elect of Christ, and carried on His shoulders to the place of Calvary, nor parted from Him before His death; near which stood Mary, the Mother of JESUS, full of grief, with the beloved disciple John and the loving Magdalen. I beseech thee, stand by me, and protect me ever, here and every where, day and night, lest the malicious enemy prevail against me, that lyer-in-wait for souls; do thou defend and strengthen me by thy sacrosanct and most efficacious Sign, that so I may persevere in right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity, for His sake who died upon thee for me.

10. O Cross, full of all virtue, and most worthy of all honour! Lo! before thee trembles impious hell; under thy power are bowed dominions; before thee knees are bent in

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heaven and in earth. For in thy might are wrought, in many places, signs and miracles; lightnings and thunders retire before thee. In wars, also, and in dark places; in perils of sea and sky, most sure is thy protection, and most firm thy patronage.

11. O Cross most holy, supremely to be venerated, worthily to be remembered, intimately to be loved, to be engraved upon the heart, to be imprinted upon brow and breast! I beg devoutly, I seek earnestly, be thou at my side in all my tribulation. Do thou save, free, bless, sanctify, all my members, govern my senses, and all my words and deeds, as long as I continue in this life; that by thee He may receive me, who by thee redeemed me, JESUS Christ my Lord, who was crucified for me.

12. O Cross, health-bearing Tree, exalted above all trees! Loftier thou art than the cedar, more fragrant than the cypress, fairer than the palm, more precious than the balsam, richer than the olive, more fruitful than the vine, sweeter than the fig, more verdant than the box, more ruddy than the rose, more salubrious than all spices and choicest drugs, of more wondrous efficacy than all balms and salves. Thou healest soul and body; thou assuagest pains, and consolest tears. Thou grantest hope to the miserable, and assurance of reward to the just. Thou givest pardon to penitents, and bestowest grace and mercy upon all who flee to thee for aid. Thou pourest abundant blessing upon the devout, openest the eyes of the wandering, stirrest their hearts to compunction, and ceasest not to bear the oil of consolation to all the faithful throughout the world; nor wilt thou cease, even to the end of time, to germinate with the fruit of eternal life, through the virtue of our Lord JESUS Christ, crucified for the salvation of the world.

13. O Cross most sweet, in leaf most ample, in flower most luxuriant, in fruit most fertile! Thou holdest the place of sovereignty, and chiefest dignity, above all images representing the sacred Passion of Christ, wheresoever the Name of Christ hath been heard or preached. And therefore, in reverence of the divine power latent within thee, worthily art thou by all adored, venerated, and honoured. In churches

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and chapels, in keeps and castles, in cities and towns, on gates and doors, on walls and windows, in towers and houses, on pavements and sepulchres, on altars and vaulted roofs, on chasubles and stoles, on copes and tippets, on bridles and standards, on books and parchments, on tables and footstools, in rooms and cells, on buildings of all kinds and paintings, thou dost imprint and inscribe the emblem of thy mystic power. With gold and silver too, with jewels and precious stones, art thou becomingly adorned. With purple and fine linen, yea with finest linen and silk, with flowers and roses, thou art reverently enwrapped and invested, for the sake of the glorious image of our Redeemer triumphing and hanging upon thee. All this service of devout homage, worthily is it paid thee by the faithful, for that thou didst endure great confusion and derision during Christ's Passion, at the hands of the treacherous Jews. Just, therefore, is it, O good and holy Cross, that thou which wast partaker of the confusion and sorrow, shouldest share the honour and exaltation. Howbeit, none of mortals shall be able to pay to thy dignity sufficient praise and honour, even though he were exalted with the virtues of all the Angels, or were glorious with the miracles of the Saints. All praise and honour falls too low, and comes far too short in words for what thy dignity demands; for by reason of the benefits of Christ, upon us most copiously bestowed, and of thy stedfast adhesion to Christ even in the article of death, a more ample meed of praise is rightly due to thee.

14. Herein chiefly is the fidelity of friendship seen, when any is found by the side of his friend at his last need, condoling with him, and waiting upon his wants, and is his constant companion, not parted from him, even to the close of life. Such a friend didst thou surely prove thyself, O most faithful Cross, towards our Saviour, the Lord JESUS CHRIST; who first patiently carried thee upon His shoulders, and thou, in thy turn, didst reverently receive thy Creator within thine arms. Nay, not even at the close of all didst thou desert thy Lover, by whom thou wast so fondly embraced, and borne so far. Whence, to such as are true worshippers of Christ, and His Cross-bearers, thou art made the mirror of patience in the discipline of the flesh; yea, and as the vanquisher of all labours, and

dispenser of eternal rewards, thou art lauded by the lovers of the Cross, as is most clearly seen in Blessed Peter the Apostle, and Saint Andrew, who both by the Cross attained to Christ.

15. O Cross, too happy, and to be loved above all other solace of the devout, ever to be cherished in the mind, ever to be looked upon with the eyes! Thou wert the couch of the Saint of Saints; who, when He had not where to lay His aching and languid Head, found a pillow in thee. The bed thou wert whereon was laid the ulcerated back of our Saviour; no bed of down nor strewn with flowers, but stiff and sharp, and withal too strait. None didst thou permit to linger nor rest with thee, nor to repose within thine arms save the holy, deifying Body of JESUS, Virgin-born, by whose most precious Blood thou didst deserve to be touched, sprinkled, and consecrated in different places. Thou wast the footstool of the holy Feet of the Son of God, whilst standing in His Agony. Thou, the Altar of the High Priest, whereon Christ offered Himself for our sins, a Sacrifice to God for a sweet savour. Thou, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, containing the Framer of both Testaments. Thou, the golden Urn, having the hidden Manna, the true Body of Christ immolated for us. Thou, the Treasury of the Most High King, full of celestial treasures; wherein are contained the most sacred Relics of the whole world, to wit, the Lord's Body, the Bloody Nails, the Crown of Thorns, and all the costly Wounds.

16. O Cross, truly hallowed, with what wondrous magnificence hast thou deserved to be embellished, enriched, and honoured by God! For with goods so great, and relics so holy, art thou adorned, that no casket, no coffer, no kingly court, no house of ivory, no marble pillar, can compete with thy dignity. Very meet, therefore, and just is it, that with all devotion the whole world should worship thee, sing of thee, and praise thy name, for ever and ever, in honour of the Crucified. Let every faithful soul, therefore, read and frequently meditate on the words written of the Holy Cross; and let her say with Blessed Paul the Apostle, and with Holy Church, It behoveth us to glory in the Cross of our Lord JESUS Christ, in whom is our safety, life, and resurrection. Amen.

IV.

(4th for the Passion.)

OF THE MANIFOLD FRUIT OF REMEMBERING THE LORD'S
PASSION, AND OF GRATITUDE FOR IT.

*Consider our Lord JESUS Christ, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*¹

MANIFOLD is the good which Christ's Passion confers upon man, as often as it is recalled to the memory; and the more frequently and intently we meditate upon it, so much the more sweetly does it relish, and the more powerfully move us to compunction. For it is the incentive of divine love, the school of patience, and comfort in tribulation. It puts to flight remissness of spirit; it is the material of holy compunction; the exercise of interior devotion. It is the exclusion of despair; the sure hope of the remission of sins; the profitable recovery of time mis-spent. It is the sovereign confidence in the article of death, lest man should despair at the thought of himself. It is the reconciliation of divine Justice in the future Judgment. It is the easing of anxious perturbation; the support under hard rebuke. It is the expulsion of perverse thought; the repression of carnal temptation. It is the training of lowly subjection; the consolation of bodily sickness. It is the refutation of secular honour; the rebuke of temporal abundance. It is the counselling of voluntary poverty; the abdication of self-will; the curbing of superfluous needs. It is the excitement of a tepid conversation; the inflaming of a fervent amendment. It is the means of obtaining a larger supply of grace, of bringing in celestial consolation, of securing fraternal compassion. It is the preparation for divine contemplation; it is the augmentation of future blessedness. It is the alleviation of present punishment; it is the purgation of the fire that shall follow; it is the great satisfaction for daily sins. With these and other benefits without number does the Passion of Christ redound and blossom luxuriantly, if devoutly pondered, frequently read, ruminated on in the inmost soul. This is better under-

¹ Heb. xii. 3.

stood and more sweetly relished by the soul devoted to God, a stranger to the world, a friend to solitude, that sets a guard before her mouth, is lowly in heart, and at rest from cares. This holy recollection is specially pleasing to God, rejoices Angels, edifies men, purifies the conscience, repels weariness of spirit, allays pains, sweetens bitternesses, represses anger, bridles concupiscence. Truly the Passion of Christ is the hidden treasure of God, the plenitude of all virtue, the perfection of the religious life, the sum of all sanctity.

2. But, alas, how great is the ingratitude of man! how covetous the desires of his heart! how great his negligence in the recollection of the benefits of God, which are so great, so vast and precious, that they can neither be estimated, nor by any fully explained! Return, therefore, to thy heart, O servant of Christ; and, laying aside the thought of vain and perishing things, call to mind the benefits of God, and above all meditate, frequently and earnestly, upon the Passion of Christ, that so thou mayest be thereby inflamed to a more fervent love of Him. Then shalt thou be pleasing to God, and in thine own heart full of marvellous joy and peace, if thou be mindful of the benefits of God, and devoutly return Him thanks, at whose hands thou hast received every good. Then dost thou lay out thy time to much profit, when thou grieveest for thine evil deeds, and givest thanks for the blessings of God. But for this do thou greatly grieve, that thou hast never returned worthy thanks to God for His benefits, which are so immense. But not even so canst thou return Him sufficient thanks, even though thou wert to have time for nothing else. Yet oughtest thou to strive to raise thy heart to God, and, as far as thou canst, to ponder on the benefits of God with great attention.

3. O how greatly hath He loved thee, who hath shewn so great wonders in the beauty of creation, as to give thee materials at hand, in the sensible objects of the world, for constant thanksgiving to God, who hath created thee and those good things! Study, then, with all reverence to serve Him in the joy of thy heart, as do the holy Angels in Heaven; so far, that is, as the frailty of the body permits, and the condition of the present life, which, in comparison of future blessedness, is rather meet to be called the prison of the soul. For for this

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cause was it that God vouchsafed to be made Man, to suffer, to be crucified, and to die; that by His Passion, Cross, and Death, He might shew thee how much He loved thee, for whom He laboured and endured so much. Be not, therefore, unthankful, nor forget all the Lord JESUS Christ did on earth; but diligently meditate upon the mighty works of God, bestowed in abundant streams of bounty upon the whole race of man, who hath promised yet much greater blessings, and will most surely render them to thee in Heaven, if only thou be grateful for present mercies, and continue faithful in a few things even unto death.

4. A great vice verily is ingratitude, and worthy of all reproof, both with God and men. For unworthy is he of the Divine favour, who gives not thanks to God with a devout heart. Nor deserves he to receive better, who extols himself in any thing, or works negligently, when one talent only has been committed to him. A great matter truly is it, that God vouchsafes to give any thing to man. Nor ought it to be esteemed a small thing, that so great a Lord, so high above all, gives to man, poor and sinful, who has nought worthy to give in return. Greatly, therefore, be God loved by us; let His praise be ever in our mouth, and let a little be esteemed as much. Let us make a return of the whole to Him, to Him be the whole ascribed, who truly hath given the whole, and bestowed favours on the unworthy. Nor does God require ought else, than to be purely loved and worthily praised for all; that so by loving, praising, honouring, and thanking Him above all things, man may be perpetually beatified in Christ. Amen.

V.

(5th on the Passion.)

OF PROFITABLE EXERCISE IN THE PASSION OF CHRIST.

I to my Beloved; and His turning is towards me.¹

BETWEEN lovers there is a pleasure in the interchange of mutual discourse, and a delight in secret communing, such as is often held between the devout soul and JESUS Cruci-

¹ Cant. vii. 10. Vulg.

The Soul. fied. Here, then, are her words; I to my Beloved am what I am; and beside Him I care for no other.

To Him alone I desire to give my thoughts, to Him I entirely commend myself; for He cares for me, and His turning, I doubt not, is towards me. I would not, therefore, that my eyes should stray elsewhere, but that my whole heart should be turned towards my Beloved, who suffered and was crucified for me; yea, was wholly wounded, and mangled with wounds, for love of me. In time past I sought Him a little Babe crying in a manger; but now I desire to look upon Him hanging on the Cross. For even as I then turned to adore the little Child who was born, so too do I now turn myself to Him, that I may bewail Him given up to death for me.

2. In all these things Beloved is He to me, who hath been wholly given to me; who for me was truly born, for me truly suffered and was immolated. Time was when He shed tears of compassion, now He gives His precious Blood. See how He loved me, who gave Himself up to death to deliver me from death! Ought I not, then, by good right, neglecting every other, to turn myself to seek, hold, embrace, this Beloved One, whose unspeakable affection unceasingly regards me? But specially is His turning then towards me, when by the interior motions of love He excites me to recal the memory of His Passion, and calls upon me to renew my gratitude, and conform myself in my inmost heart to Him; since in nothing hath He so laboured for me. There He opens to me the Mystery of Redemption, and more fully instructs me how to relish the things which are of God. For this wisdom surpasseth man, which cometh from above, teaching and persuading me not to glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is my whole safety, my redemption, *by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world;*¹ so that I am fain to say to Him with confidence, *I to my Beloved; and His turning is towards me.* Great is the sweetness which seems to me contained in this saying; and though I cannot receive all, yet I despair not of receiving perchance something, albeit the very least. Only let my Beloved be turned to me, and say whatsoever pleaseth Him; I know that He will not speak in vain.

¹ Gal. vi. 14.

For the Passion.

3. Tell me, my Beloved JESU, the saying of Thy Mystery, the saying of Thy Passion and Cross, The Soul. which Thou didst bear openly manifested in Thy Flesh; for all receive not the saying of the Cross; for to some it seemeth an offence, to others it is folly; but to me it is the Power and Wisdom of God, the Salvation also of the world, and Eternal Life. If any is wise after another manner, he is an infidel, and unwise, and shall bear the judgment of God against himself.

4. My Passion, saith the Beloved, is even as CHRIST. some sovereign aromatic herb, of choicest perfume, and most sweet to the taste, which being diligently mused on in the heart, as if well bruised in a mortar, scattereth a most powerful fragrance, healing the disease and languor of all vices. Herein truly shalt thou find healing balm for thy soul, and full solace under every pressure. But it behoveth thee to exercise thyself frequently therein, and to study with thy whole heart to conform thyself thereto. Then, indeed, shalt thou begin to live religiously, and shalt truly advance in virtues, and die peacefully; if in life and death thou shalt imitate Me in My Cross and Passion. But, alas my sorrow! I am counted vile in Mine own house, and cast behind the back as worthless. For I seem altogether a stranger and an outcast from the hearts of many, for whom My life has no relish; whom My Passion moves not, nor draws, neither does it find its way to their heart as it ought; but they are entangled in vain and superfluous pursuits. Their own daily misery and want they ponder with studious heed, and disquiet themselves how they may avoid temporal evils; but how great things I suffered for them, they rarely or briefly recollect. Wretched are they and miserable, full of cares and complaints: little is it they can suffer for Me, but much they desire to do for their own will; moreover, in the fulfilment of their own desire they feel scarcely any labour. Alas! such as these derive no salutary fruit from My Passion; but by reason of the excessive tenderness which they feel towards themselves, they incur the grievous destruction of the soul. For were they willing to be perfectly healed, and to be freed from their sufferings, they would flee with all humility to the true remedies of the Soul, hidden in My Passion; and by the Merit and Virtue of My

Passion they would gain greater strength, and learn to bear with patience all that is contrary to them. My Passion has no relish save to such as meditate upon it with steady and solemn thought, and fervently desire to imitate the same. It is the Tree of Life to all such as apprehend it; and whoso followeth it well shall be happy in his deed. For in the present life he shall obtain greater grace, and hereafter more abundant glory.

CHRIST.

5. Recollect thy senses, therefore, and abide within thyself, shutting out all disturbance. Then take some brief particular of the Passion, and diligently consider it according to the time and hour. Thus recalled each day to memory, more and more will it relish, strengthen thee, and inflame thee as thou meditatest. For all spiritual progress and perfection is found therein; but by none except those who love it and desire to emulate it, are these good things tasted. To the carnal and secular it seemeth bitter and hard; but to the loving and devout it is sweet and full of comfort. For they who aim at honours, or at the acquisition of earthly wealth, seeking every where their own advantage, such as these are not conformed to My Passion, nor able to attain to its interior sweetness. But he who seeks to condemn the world, and to crucify his flesh, with its vices and lusts, such an one finds the greatest consolation and shall feel singular devotion in My Passion. To such a soul I speak; *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.*¹ For her also do I frequently store those words, which I spake to a certain beloved disciple; Reach hither thy hand,² and observe the prints of the nails, and be not cowardly and fearful, but courageous and of a noble spirit, in imitating My sufferings. He shall have also a singular refuge in the open Wound of My Right Side, whoever strives to renounce himself, and to strip himself of all affection for creatures. He shall also find himself so much the more free to visit Me, in the deep Wound of love, as he has no longer any care for the comfort of creatures. For I draw his whole interior to Myself, so that he feels not himself, who feels My wounded Heart. Make thyself a stranger, therefore, to all earthly occupation; put behind thee all empty disquietudes, remove thyself to a distance from friends and

¹ Cant. ii. 14.

² Vid. S. John xx. 27.

For the Passion.

acquaintances, keep thyself pure and free from all things, that thou mayest be able to come in to thy Beloved, through the door of the Wound of His Side. Bring in with thee such affection as was in those holy women, who beheld Me hanging upon the Cross, and mourned most bitterly, as for an only-begotten son. For then shalt thou be able truly to understand and taste how great is the power of My Passion in the heart of a lover, if thou put on the bowels of My beloved Mother; if with thy whole heart thou esteem nothing so worthy of love as Me; for from the magnitude of love is drawn the magnitude of compassion.

6. Well, yea very well, do Thy words please me, O Lord JESU Christ. Wherefore, I beseech The Soul. Thee, although in all things I cannot perfectly imitate Thee, yet grant me in some small measure to suffer with Thee. I will lift up the eyes of my heart to my Lord hanging naked upon the Cross. With attentive heed will I consider each stripe and puncture of His Body, and with intent devotion embrace and kiss His wounded Hands and perforated Feet, even with the very nails. Then will I enter into the open Wound of His Side, as into the Chamber where my Beloved is asleep: where I may live hidden, and be protected from all harm, and repose in happy security, in divine peace. I will fear no evils, come upon me what may, and whatever may be said or thought of me to my contempt, so Thou be with me, and abide with me. I will rely upon Thee, and night and day will dwell within Thy Side. Thou art a more faithful Friend than all this world besides. Thou art a stronger Wall of defence than all the host of Angels. And therefore ought I never to be unmindful of Thee; but, as far as my power and infirmity permit, I will call sorrowfully to mind Thy most bitter Passion. Of the which, however, no creature can sufficiently think, nor speak, and write of it with clearness and suitably to its greatness, even though all were employed on this one subject only; for it exceedeth all comprehension of the creature, that Thou, O God, Creator of all, didst vouchsafe to be made Man, and to die for men.

7. Wherefore I humbly entreat Thee, Lord, to look with pity upon me a sinner; by Thy ineffable grace to enlighten

me within, often to visit me, to bedew me with tears, bruise and cleanse me with compunction; that whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious Blood, Thou mayest renovate and inflame through the earnest meditation of Thy Passion. Grant me devoutly to advance in it, and ever to derive from it the salutary remedies of all my sufferings. Would that it might make its entrance into my heart more and more powerfully and deeply than heretofore; and so affect and inform me, as it has often inflamed and moved to compunction many Holy men and Holy women; so that even in my life there may result the similitude of Thy Death, by the operation of the Spirit, and the mortification of the flesh; and that I may be able to repeat the memorable saying of the Apostle; *I am crucified with Christ*;¹ and to preach that equally most affectionate saying, against all the carnal and vain-talking wise of the world: *From henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord JESUS*.² The Blessed Apostle Paul bore in his body Thy glorious and precious marks; since, besides the daily memory of Thy Passion, he rejoiced with the entire affection of his heart to be outwardly afflicted and counted vile for Thy Name: and whatsoever he felt painful to his body, or grievous to his soul, he counted all as light and very easy to be borne, from the loving consideration of Thy Wounds. And therefore he exhorted all Thy faithful lovers in the words, Let us always bear about in our body the mortification of JESUS, that the Life also of JESUS may be made manifest in our bodies.³ Study thou also, O my soul, in like manner to do the same; specially on these days, on which the adorable memory of the Lord's Passion is celebrated in the Church, and with mournful mind and devout attention turn thither the eye of thy contemplation, where thou knowest that JESUS was for thee very sorely pained. Say affectionately with the Bride, mindful ever of thy Spouse, and out of love of the Crucified; *I to my Beloved; and His turning is towards me*.⁴

¹ Gal. ii. 20.³ Vid. 2 Cor. iv. 10.² Gal. vi. 17.⁴ Cant. vii. 10. Vulg.

VI.

(6th on the Passion.)

OF SEVEN NOTABLE POINTS OF MEDITATION ON THE PASSION
OF CHRIST.*Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow.*¹

ABOVE all the benefits of God, lavished upon mankind, the Passion of Christ is most pre-eminent, and moves the heart to liveliest compunction. Therefore, for the commemoration of so great a benefit, the mind ought to be actively on the watch; and with great compassion of the heart to dwell earnestly on the bitterness of Christ's Passion; for this is pleasing to God, and healthful to him who meditates. For the several Wounds are the healing balm of souls; and the cruel stripes of the scourges are the tokens of divine Love, and the purification of our sins. O, what great thanks am I bound to render to Christ for every stripe and cruel wound, which He bore in His Body for me a vile sinner!

2. Consider, then, first, Who it is, who suffers this; secondly, at whose hands He suffers; thirdly, how great things He suffers; fourthly, for whom He suffers; fifthly, for how long a time He suffers; sixthly, in what places He suffers; seventhly, in what members He suffers. For greatly do these seven notable points assist towards an intimate compassion, if they be considered in order. For if thou regardest the Person of Him who suffers, there is none worthier, none greater, none more holy, none more excellent. For verily He who suffers is the Son of God; the Only-begotten of God the Father, the First-born of the Virgin His Mother, conceived of the Holy Ghost; full of holiness and grace; for miracles and virtues illustrious; conversing in the world, yet without sin. He is the Very Lamb of God without spot, prefigured in the Law, foretold by the Prophets, desired by many kings and just; destined by the Father to be sent into the world to suffer for the salvation of the world; prepared of

1. Who it is
who suffers.

¹ Lam. i. 12.

His own accord for the Cross and for death ; sacrificed to God the Father for our sins upon the Altar of the Cross. He then, such an One, and so great, True Priest and chief Pontiff, Holy, Innocent, Immaculate ; the Lord, the King of kings, Creator of all things, Maker of the Angels, Redeemer of men,—refuses not by men to be despised, taken, bound, scourged, crucified, to die, to be buried, even as the text of His sacred Passion doth plainly teach.

3. O lamentable spectacle ! to every passer-by, along the way of this life, spread forth in the open world for all to see ; and, as respects inward limitation, given for an example to all the faithful. I pray thee, diligently consider each special word and stripe depicted in the Passion ; for it was for thy salvation that all was done. For they commend to thee the exceeding charity of Christ, and shew that patience is to be preserved under every tribulation. Most certain is it, that in comparison with the sorrows and reproaches of Christ, the distresses thou sufferest are of no moment. Good, therefore, is it for thee frequently to turn thine eye hither, and to seek for comfort in the dolorous Passion of Christ ; yea, as a dove to dwell in the clefts of the Rock,¹ and to mourn for the pains of JESUS. For JESUS alone by the meditation of His Blessed Passion will console thee more than this whole world besides, in all its honours and riches. In Christ's Passion thou wilt find wherewithal to edify thee, and purify thy conscience ; but in the love of worldly things there is brief enjoyment, and a foul conscience remains behind. For all that is not of God is vanity, and to be counted as nothing. But Christ's Passion is a living sermon and efficacious lesson, to instruct, inflame, and purify ; and, sharper than any sword, it penetrates even to the inmost depths of the heart. For it rebukes negligence, softens hardness, rends the heart of the lover to compassion, and moves it most frequently to tears. For as often as the Passion of Christ is read or preached, or the Cross is looked on, or JESUS Christ, and He crucified, is named, the devout soul is stirred to compunction, and, as it were, wounded within. And this is great comfort to the soul, if, while thinking on the Passion of

¹ Vid. Cant. ii. 14.

For the Passion.

Christ, she feel in her mind that pain which Christ suffered and felt many ways in His Body.

4. Now, therefore, observe and look upon Christ as present, who suffers these things for thee. The dignity of the Person suffering. First consider the dignity of His Person, and be excited to most vehement compassion, since God Incarnate is handled with such contumely. Behold, He who is Highest above all is thrust down below all; the Most Noble is disgraced; the Most Beauteous is defiled with spittings; the Most Wise is derided; the Most Powerful is bound; the Most Innocent is scourged; the Most Holy is crowned with thorns; the Most Meek is buffeted; the Most Affluent is impoverished; the Most Bountiful stripped; the Most Chaste is denuded; the Most Worthy blasphemed; the Most Excellent maligned; the Most Learned counted a fool; the Most Loving hated; the Most True denied; the Most Sweet has gall given Him to drink; the Blessed is cursed; the Peaceful is molested; the Just is accused; the Blameless is condemned; the Physician is wounded; the SON of GOD is crucified; the Immortal is killed; the Lord is hung as a slave. O unheard-of deed! O horrible and execrable wickedness of the Jews; which yet God, by His most tender mercy and long-suffering, converted into so great a boon, to wit, the salvation of all believers! For wherein for a time the Light of the world is extinguished, there is eternal Light rekindled in the minds of the faithful. And where for a short time the Life dieth, there is eternal death slain in the elect. Finally, by the Passion of Christ the devil is vanquished and confounded; hell is despoiled; the thief is converted; the world is redeemed; the souls of the just are freed from prison; the gates of Heaven are opened wide; the ruin of Angels is repaired; and everlasting salvation, wrought by Christ, is proclaimed to the whole world.

5. Consider, secondly, from whom it is that Christ suffers these ills. Verily, from His own 2. From whom Christ suffers. nation, from the peculiar people of His love, from His kindred according to the flesh, from Israelites, the sons of Abraham, whom He formerly enriched with so many benefits, exalted with so many privileges, instructed above other nations, with precepts, and laws, and ceremonies;

from men whom He Himself formed, to whom He allotted the choicest portion of the earth, for whose sake He came into the world, and whom He earnestly desired to save. By this people, therefore, so munificently benefitted and exalted, Christ is unrighteously spurned, enviously accused, afflicted without a cause, and at the last condemned to a most ignominious death. They were not mindful of the multitude of His mercies, which are from everlasting; nor of His wonderful works which He shewed them, even after they offended in many things. They considered not, with what lowliness He lived amongst them, with what wholesome doctrine He taught them; how He loved poverty, and contemned riches; how He shunned honours, and chose the lowly and simple; how many sick He healed, blind He restored to sight, devils He cast out, lepers He cleansed; and being famed for many glorious miracles, by His deeds He approved Himself as God; and sharing the necessities of our body, He shewed Himself to be Very Man. Truly for those good and excellent virtues, wrought by His divine Power, He deserved not contumely, but glory; not punishment, but gratitude; not hatred, but love; He ought not to have received derision, but rather honour from all. But, O grievous to think! perverse and unbelieving, they proved ungrateful for all His benefits; and for His many good things they returned many evils. Moreover, very many others did they instigate to the same crime, thus aggravating their malice, and with threats and clamours demanded the death of the Innocent. For by the persuasion of the rulers, and by the stirring up of the priests, the people were moved, and one and all are set against the CHRIST; old and young together vociferate with terrible cries, *Away with Him, away with Him! crucify Him!*¹ All the praise and honour, which went before, were turned to lamentation; all the applause and singing of the Hebrew children into the yelling of savage wolves. No age was lacking; no sex was silent; no state of life was passed by; all the wicked of heart, Jews and Gentiles, agree and consent to deliver up JESUS quickly to death, and to hang that innocent Soul on the Cross. Wherefore, they all are made guilty of eternal damnation in that they compassed

¹ S. John xix. 15.

For the Passion.

the death of Christ. Verily, they are malignant Homicides, and most cruel Deicides, who in nothing spared the SON of GOD; but perpetrated against Him all the evil in their power. For they feigned what was false, and perverted what had been well and gloriously done. O wondrous clemency of God! O inestimable patience of Christ! which so great injuries could not move, nor so great pains subdue. For in this particular He gave a most excellent example, and most powerful comfort to all who suffer wrong; that they may at least endure a few flying words, who are not able as yet to endure hard stripes.

6. Thirdly, thou oughtest to consider, how great things Christ suffers, and by how many such numerous ills are inflicted on Him. It is shewn, truly, by the witness of the Gospel, that first for a small sum of money He was sold by His own disciple; afterwards by a kiss of pretended peace He was delivered up to His enemies; by the priests grievously reviled; by the high priest called a blasphemer; defamed by the Scribes and Pharisees; accused by the elders of the city; presented by the officers to the judge; by Herod scorned and mocked; by Pilate adjudged to death; by the men of war taken and bound; by the soldiers scourged and crowned; by the servants reviled, spit upon, and buffeted; by the maid-servants looked on with abhorrence, so that they said to Peter, *Surely thou art also one of them*; and, *Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee*.¹ Scarce any was found, how destitute and vile soever, who rejoiced not in the punishment of JESUS. O sorrow passing sorrow! O poor and lowly JESUS, who hast no comforter nor helper among the sons of men! Thine acquaintance have withdrawn; Thy friends stand afar off; weep they could, to help they were unable. Amongst His most wicked enemies, JESUS was forsaken; by the greatest even to the least He was demanded to death; with confusion and clamour He was led without the city, laden with the Wood of the Cross, stript of His vesture, suspended naked between thieves, fixed to the Cross with nails, given gall and vinegar to drink. Grievous were the impious words, more grievous still the cruel stripes, most grievous of all the horrible punishment of the Cross. Upon His most tender, most holy, most pure, and most beau-

3. How great things Christ suffers.

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 69, 73.

For the Passion.

teous virginal Body did they practise such ignominious torments, that, from the sole of His foot even to His Head, there was no wholeness in His Body; but He appeared even as a leper to all beholders. *See now, therefore, and consider, if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow*, which He thy God suffers for thee. Number, if thou canst, all the stripes, all the wounds, all the blows, all the indignities, all the pollutions, inflicted on Him by many; and suffer in union with His compassionate Heart, which patiently endures all these things. Write them on the tablet of thine heart for an everlasting memorial; and in all thy tribulation turn the eye of thy soul upon JESUS hanging on the Cross. For this Crucifixion was to Christ, after so many punishments inflicted on Him, most ignominious, most bitter, and most grievous. It was also most sorrowful to Him, in respect of His friends standing afar off, and bewailing most copiously, because He esteemed their groans and lamentations as sorrow of His own. It was also most cruel, in respect of His adversaries, who derided Him, reviled Him, and exulted in His death, who were moved with no pity at so great pains and ills. And now, behold, thou hast heard how great things Christ suffered, and from how many; with Him it is fit that every Christian should suffer. Were any to see his father, or some very dear friend, tortured before his eyes with so many pains, and suspended on the public gibbet before the gate; would he not instantly be struck with feelings of love, and droop and faint with grief? Much more, then, ought the Passion of Christ to penetrate thine inmost bowels, and to provoke thee to most wholesome sorrow. Study, therefore, to cast away from thee all carnal love, to exclude all idle joy; that thou mayest deserve to be counted amongst the devout lovers of Christ, who daily exercise themselves in the Lord's Passion, and so draw all the sorrows of Christ to themselves, that they consider little or nothing of their own hurts or injuries. Of whom saith Blessed Paul the Apostle, the lover of the Lord's Passion, *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*¹

¹ Phil. ii. 5, 7, 8.

For the Passion.

7. Fourthly, thou art to consider for whom Christ suffered, and for what reason God endured so bitter a death. Verily for our sins, which we contracted from our parents, and which we have also committed each through his own fault, at whatsoever age, in whatsoever state, or rank, or function. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,*¹ saith the Apostle, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, whether poor or rich, whether Kings or Princes, whether Clerics or Laics, whether Priests or Doctors, whether Prelates or their subordinates,—all, I say, are children of Adam, all children of wrath, as born by nature; but by the grace of Christ we are freed, by the Baptism of Christ we are cleansed, by the death of Christ we are saved from eternal death. Whether, therefore, it be called the Passion of Christ, or the Blood of Christ, or the Cross of Christ, or the Death of Christ, it avails to the same end, and we have the benefit of the whole together for our salvation; because, by believing on Christ, and by loving Christ, we are incorporated into Christ, and live in Him. For the Head suffered for the members, the Head grieved for the members, the Head prayed upon the Cross for the members, and obtained pardon. Therefore for all did Christ die; that, having tasted temporal death, He might vanquish eternal death, and condemn sin by bearing it; that is, that the penalty of His Passion might pay all the debts of our sins. Hence also, Blessed Peter, commending the grace of Christ, and the merit of His Passion, saith, *For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.*² Hence, also, we read in the Apocalypse, that the souls of the Saints, with great thanksgiving, fell down before the Throne of God, and in Presence of the Lamb sang praises for their Redemption, saying, *Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy Blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests.*³ Hence also it is, that Holy Mother Church, in the Litanies of the Saints, when she prays for divers necessities and perils, directs this petition specially to Christ: By Thy Passion and Cross, by Thy Death and Burial, deliver us, O Lord! For

4. For whom
Christ suf-
fers.

¹ Rom. iii. 23.² 1 S. Pet. iii. 18.³ Rev. v. 9, 10.

For the Passion.

such a prayer is particularly pleasing to God, and affords greater confidence of obtaining pardon, for the sake of the merit of Christ's Passion. For the Passion of Christ is the treasure of the Church, which cannot be exhausted, nor consumed, but is of infinite virtue and dignity. For by it every debt is paid, every sin is forgiven; and to the penitent is promised and granted the Kingdom of Heaven, which through many thousands of years was kept closed. O most sweet Reconciliation, for appeasing the Divine Countenance! O most worthy Oblation, for the recovery of forfeited grace! O most sufficient Satisfaction, for wiping away every spot of the sins of the children of Adam, in whom all have sinned and are fallen! Since, then, Christ findeth none free from sin, therefore cometh He to free all; for all, of His charity, maketh He satisfaction; of His pity He is willing, by His Divinity He is able; of His Humanity hath He fulfilled the work of Redemption. Wherefore Blessed Paul saith, *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*¹ Lo, thou seest, and hast heard, for whom Christ suffered, and for what cause He deigned to suffer this death; namely, for all of Adam's race, of every age, and either sex.

5. How long
a time Christ
suffers.

8. Fifthly, thou shalt consider during how long a period Christ suffered, and how long a time He continued under His punishment; for this appertains to the long-suffering of His patience, and affords signal support to the timid and the sad. Study and diligently read through all the books of the Holy Gospel, and clearly thou shalt find, that the whole Life of Christ, from his Nativity to its close, was passed in much poverty, in persecution and temptation, in labour and weariness, in contempt and obloquy from the wicked, and at length consummated in the mortification of the Cross; and thus no time passed He without tribulation, so long as He lived in the world. But if we consider the particular day and hour of His Passion, then the sorrowfulness of impending pain and future death began from the evening of the Most Sacred Supper; when, whilst His disciples were yet sitting at meat, He foretold to them, that the same night He

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

For the Passion.

should be betrayed by one of them into the hands of sinners: and it lasted even after the hour of his burial, yea, even to the third day, on which He rose again from the dead; for then He appeared to His disciples living, joyful, and glorious. Grievous, therefore, was the sin of man, which could scarcely be expiated during so long a period and by such great sorrows; for which it was necessary that even the Son of God should be crucified and die. Wherefore, because the frailty of man is exceeding great, and prone to evil from his youth; and moreover, by reason of many occasions and temptations, it happens that men sin at different times and hours, both by day and night; often knowingly, often in ignorance; so that scarce any day or hour passes without transgression, and offence of God; therefore, lest man, on account of the exceeding greatness of his transgressions, should despair of obtaining pardon, our Saviour JESUS Christ suffered for us all the most grievous pains for a long space of time, and at divers hours; for during the whole night and day He laboured and endured for the sins of the children of men, continually pouring forth His precious Blood. Then also, in very truth, during this Season, He fulfilled the Seven Canonical Hours, to the praise of God His Father, not singing, but suffering and praying for us. Wherefore, all religious brethren, instructed by the Example of Christ, ought daily to observe to God these Seven Hours, because Christ offered Himself a Holocaust to God for a sweet savour, upon the Altar of the Cross; and as a chosen ram, hanging amongst the briars of sins, was immolated for Isaac, that is, for all the Elect; concerning whom, Blessed Peter, writing to the faithful of Christ, exhorts them to gratitude, saying, *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.*¹ Therefore was our Redeemer, the Lord JESUS Christ, willing for so long a time to endure so many penalties in His most holy Body, to blot out the handwriting of our condemnation, to excite us to the fervour of strict penitence, to give us an example of great patience all the days of

Of the Seven
Canonical
Hours.

¹ 1 S. Pet. i. 18.

our life. And truly patience is highly necessary to us all, as long as we live in this wretched life, so full of temptations. For no one is secure, not even a single day or hour, from the snares of the devil and the ruin of sin, in whatever place, or rank, or office, he be situated, unless he be every hour regarded from above, and fortified by the grace and mercy of God. But amidst these evils and dangers, we must flee for protection specially to the Lord's Passion; and must lie hid and rest under the Tree of the Cross, as under the Shadow of the Divine protection, and must meditate intimately and often on the patience of Christ; for He possesses a virtue of wondrous relish to sweeten and mitigate all the bitternesses of our sufferings, and to alleviate every vexation whereby any one is harassed, whether from man or spirit.

Of the praise
of suffering.

9. Study, therefore, by the Example of Christ and of His Saints, to bear the adversities of this life with equanimity, and to hold patience for thine armour. Complain not of the length of the time, nor of the sharpness of the affliction; but consider that Christ endured more grievous things for thee, and for a longer time, and therefore it is just that thou shouldest follow the same way. For by suffering for Christ, thou meritest abundant grace, and gainest from thence many good gifts. In the first place, thou honourest God more highly, if thou takest from His hand with good will any adversity that He sends thee. Thou gladdenest the Angels, who rejoice in Heaven at thy endurance. Thou edifiest thy neighbour, if thou suffer injuries in silence. Thou confoundest the devil, if, hurt and despised, thou givest thanks. Thou doublest thy crown; for here thou shalt receive greater grace, and hereafter more exalted glory. For every present labour is small, and this life short; but the reward which follows is great, and the rest without end. In truth, so often art thou made the martyr of God, as for God thou willingly sufferest punishment. Think not, therefore, that God is set against thee, when in this world thou art molested and depressed. Rejoice rather, that here thou art humbled and scourged, that hereafter with Christ thou mayest be glorified for ever. For often is prosperity more injurious than adversity; and more frequently are we deceived by caresses than by bitter

For the Passion.

rebukes. Faint not, therefore, in thy tribulation for the Name and love of Christ, but constantly endure every thing with a patient mind, even as Christ and all His Saints have done, who, by enduring pains, have vanquished the Enemy. For by suffering adversity man is made better, more beauteous than gold, more transparent than glass, purer from vices, more perfect in virtues, more pleasing to Christ, more like His Saints, stronger against his enemies, more amiable to his friends. Every one is made also more cautious in his guard over himself, more prompt to compassion, more profound in humility, more thoughtful in discretion, more fervent in prayer, readier for heavenly things, securer from hell. These are the good fruits of holy patience, which shine with peculiar lustre in Christ's most bitter Passion; and this is proposed as a subject of imitation to us all. For this most sacred Passion was, above all the passions of the Saints, in pain most sharp, in humility most deep, in charity most excellent, in obedience most perfect, in patience most strong, in purity most innocent, in profit most healthful, in merits most worthy, in remedies most efficacious, in satisfaction for all most sufficient, in propitiation most complete, in reconciliation most pleasing, in oblation most acceptable, in redemption most fruitful, in mysteries most full, in sweetness of all virtues most redolent; above all sciences, arts, and medicines, to be preferred. So great, so high, so long, so deep, so sweet, so devout, so full of compunction, so full of love, so fervent, so comforting, so sweet in relish, so mighty in virtue, is the Passion of our Redeemer, that by no words of man can it be fully commended, by no tongues of Angels can it be worthily explained; but it is always new and vivid; it always refreshes and strengthens, instructs and inflames; but principally those who, despising all else, seek their solace in the Wounds of JESUS Christ.

10. Sixthly, thou shalt note all those places in which Christ suffered for thee any contumelies or punishments. For in the Mount of Olivet He prayed thrice; there, by reason of His sorrowfulness and dread, He sweated Blood; and, the prayer over, He perfectly resigned Himself to the Will of His Father. In the Garden He was sought and found by the Jews: He fled not from them, but

6. In what places Christ suffers.

went forth to meet them ; by Judas He was betrayed, and with a false mouth was kissed ; by the armed attendants He was taken and bound. By the wicked band He was violently dragged and led, like the worst of malefactors, with torches and lanterns, in the darkness of night, to the city ; and lest He should escape, or be rescued by any, He is most watchfully guarded. In the house of Annas He is first examined, and is inquired of by him touching His doctrine and His disciples. And when He had answered well to these things, He was rudely stricken on the cheek by one of the servants. In the house of Caiaphas the high priest, where many were gathered together against Him, He is assailed with many injuries and mockeries ; His Face is covered, defiled with spittings, buffeted, and He is proclaimed guilty of death. But when the morning was come, His hands bound, He is led publicly through the streets to Pilate's prætorium, and He is grievously accused as a transgressor of the law and subverter of the people. Next, He is sent to Herod's court, by whom He is derided, and clothed in a white robe ; He is counted a madman, and is sent back to Pilate. Every where he is mocked, every where reviled ; no where safe, no where at rest ; hated by all, made abominable to all. Without, He hears clamours ; within, He suffers pains. And after cruel stripes, and many wounds received, as though unworthy of that life, He is led without the city with the ignominious Cross, and between two thieves is hung naked upon the Cross, on Calvary. But when all things were consummated which had been written of Him, He is reverently buried in the heart of the earth, in a monument newly hewn out, by those just men Joseph and Nicodemus ; and He is deplored by the holy women with many tears and sighs. Behold, how many places Christ visited in His Passion ; how often in them He poured forth His precious Blood ; how many indignities, with stripes, He endured, that He might sanctify His people, and that He might purify the contaminated places, in which men often sin and offend God !

11. Who can enumerate, sad to say ! all the evils which still in many places are done publicly and privately, as well in houses as in streets, in gardens, in towns, in mountains and

valleys, in fields and woods, in the halls and palaces of earth? Christ is not there; no weeping is heard there for the Passion of the Saviour; but vanity of vanities, sport and laughter in the banquets of Herod with his princes. Woe to them who have thus removed themselves far off from Him who redeemed them; having their face towards the world, and turning their back to God! Yet the pitiful Lord ceases not to call after such, and to recal His wandering sheep to penitence. For great hope of His mercy has He left to men in so benignant an endurance of all evils and sorrows in His most loving Passion; and especially in these places where He was led forth and tormented. Wherefore, that He might extinguish the malice of men, and purify all unclean places, He was most grievously punished in His most sacred Body, at the hands of many. And He, who formerly, on account of the sins of men, put a curse upon the world, now by the effusion of His sacred Blood promised blessing and remission of sins to all penitents.

12. He destroyed, moreover, by the word of His preaching, the idols of the Gentiles and the habitations of demons, and overthrew the altars and names of the false gods; and for the sacrilegious rite of the Pagans, and the calves of the Jews, He instituted the true and new Sacrifice of His precious Body, to be celebrated in many places. For on this account He caused Temples and Altars to be consecrated in many places to the honour of His Name and of His Saints; that the Faith of Christians may abide unshaken, and the Divine Worship flourish with the lauds of hymns. And furthermore to adorn the place of the habitation of His glory, and to ennoble His House of Prayer with the most excellent relics, He laid up therein the devout and illustrious emblems of His Passion, for an everlasting memorial; and for a triumphal monument of His conquest over death, He reared His Holy Cross as an Altar of covenant and peace, between God and man, and as the Bow in the heavens against the terror of the devil.

13. Worthy, therefore, it is that now, in different places, by all the faithful of Christ, by small and great, by poor and rich, by wise and unlearned, by strong and weak, by Prelates and their subordinates, through the whole world, with open doors, and with the voice of every tongue, Christ who suffered should

be preached, lauded, and magnified, and should be highly exalted above every name in Heaven and in earth, for all the confusions and punishments which were inflicted on Him in many places, at the hands of many. Therefore oughtest thou also, stimulated for devotion's sake, on this Holy Day of the Preparation, to depict in thy mind all those places of the Lord's Passion, and in spirit diligently to traverse Jerusalem; frequently to raise thine eyes to the image of the Crucified, and with inward compassion to look upon the sacred prints of JESUS CHRIST, how great and how many they were. Then ask pardon, that He may mercifully forgive thee, as often as thou hast offended Him, in any place or at any time. Thou canst also visit the Altars of thy Church, and prostrate thyself upon the ground, and kiss the pavement or footstool of the Altar three or five times, in remembrance of the Blood of Christ poured out upon the earth.

14. Thou oughtest, moreover, for the sake of the love and honour of Christ, always to hold in reverence all places of Holy Church consecrated to God, all monasteries and hospitals, wheresoever a religious life is practised and God is served, and to rejoice in their good deeds, and to grieve in their adversities; that thou mayest deserve to be made partaker of all the good works which are there done day and night to the praise of God. For quickly will he obtain pardon from God, whoever, truly grieving for his sins, firmly proposes for the future to amend himself. Great confidence, also, of the Divine favour will he acquire, who, in every circumstance and petition, takes to himself the Passion of Christ for his aid, and trusts more to the merits of Christ, and the suffrages of the Saints, than to his own labours and virtues. For our works, if strictly examined, are seldom entirely pure. And therefore it is necessary to have recourse to humility and the remedy of confession, always to ask mercy of God, and to place our whole hope of safety in Christ, who is alone perfect in all things. For He is able quickly and perfectly to cure our imperfections, and to afford more abundant grace to the humble and contrite of heart.

7. In what
members
Christ suffers.

15. In the seventh and last place, thou oughtest to attend, and with exceeding grief to consider, in what members Christ suffered, and

what punishments He went through for us in every joint, and in the five senses of His Body. O what cruel stripes did He endure in scourging! how many thousand wounds were inflicted on Him! how often was He struck over again on the same place! how did He feel it all as a penalty, and yet held His peace! He did not put out His Hand to intercept the blows, nor did He draw back His Foot or other Member from them; but of His own accord, and freely, He delivered up His whole Body to the smiters, that He might make full satisfaction for the sins of all men. For, as it was revealed in a vision to a religious brother, as often as Christ received one blow of the scourge, He straightway offered it in love for us to the Father, begging Him to pardon our transgressions. For never did this Son, so beloved, murmur at any moment against His Father, because He exposed Him to such great penalties. He threatened not, whilst they were cruelly torturing Him. He was not angry, whilst they shamefully spat upon Him. He spoke no evil, whilst they accused Him falsely; but He rather grieved with them, excused, tolerated, and prayed for them, that they might receive pardon, saying, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*¹

16. But what was the cause of so great an evil, and of sorrow thus immense? Verily the many sins of men, who, in their many members, through their five senses, most frequently transgress and grievously offend God. For the limbs of their body, with which they ought to serve God, and might do many good works, these, sad to think! shutting out the fear of God, they deliver up with presumptuous boldness to divers vanities and corrupt pleasures, and, by thus sinning, become the slaves of vices, and members and vessels of devils. Wherefore Christ, the Son of God, compassionating men, and desiring to heal sinners, and to snatch them out of the devil's snares, received and endured grievous and protracted tortures in His most holy Body; that, by means of the pains of His Body, through His five senses, He might confer medicine upon our souls, and teach that all the pleasures of the flesh, which war against the Spirit, are to be avoided and mortified. That God, therefore, might not, on account of his sins, eternally punish man,

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 34.

who, deserting his Sovereign Good, adhered to creatures, the pitiful Lord Christ took upon Himself this temporal punishment and death of the flesh for our faults, Himself free from all fault, that He might appease the anger of His Father, and free us from eternal penalties.

17. But now turn the eye of thy heart to His several limbs, mangled with wounds, and shed tears with the loving affection of compassion. Begin from the sole of The Feet of Christ. His Foot, and ascend even to the crown of His Head; for the whole Body of JESUS is full of the most bitter pain. Surely, wert thou now in like pain, or wert thou lying upon thy bed oppressed with sickness, wouldest thou not be pleased with him who should condole with thee, and be dissatisfied with him who should neglect and pass thee by? Look, therefore, upon the Lord JESUS, suffering for thy sake, for thy sake wounded and dead, and bestow at the least a groan at the thought of all His sorrows, if thou canst not call forth a lamentation. For when Blessed Stephen was stoned, devout and faithful men made great lamentation over him. And, lo, a greater than Stephen, yea, above all Saints, the greatest of Saints, hangs upon the Wood of the Cross, full of wounds; and therefore deservedly ought every faithful to sorrow with Him, but particularly the devout Religious, who has renounced the world. Behold, therefore, first, how grievously Christ suffered and was wounded in His beauteous and clean Feet, with which He walked often wearied over the earth, preaching the word of God; with which He trod upon the waves of the sea, without a boat, without human aid to carry Him across. For by that divine virtue and power by which He created all things, He was able to command the winds and the sea, and to hold them at His use. But, alas, how wondrous a change of things, and how incomprehensible a dispensation of God! that the Author of all creatures, and the Sovereign Physician of souls and bodies, who made many lame suddenly walk, is now so savagely wounded in His Feet, so strongly pierced with iron nails, that He can neither advance nor move Himself; but, like the most wicked thief, is held fast to the Cross with cruel bonds! Thus punished was the Innocent Christ, and transfix'd through either Foot, who,

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according to the Prophet, looseth men out of prison, giveth sight to the blind, helpeth them that are fallen, careth for the righteous.¹ And why this? Truly, that He might loose the bonds of our sins, and wash away the stains of our feet, which are many ways contracted in running to and fro, in walking, in going abroad, in playing, in dancing.

18. O, how grievously do they sin who tread down the poor; who go forth in pompous state; who excite tumults in the Church, and hinder those who are praying; who scandalize many by lightly roving abroad, and by their unchastened demeanour! Woe to them who, from weariness in good works, and defect of devotion, seek for consolation in rumours, and business which does not concern them. Such truly, were they fastened by a single nail of the fear of the Lord, would abide willingly by themselves in solitude, meditating on the Passion of Christ, or would read some portion of the Holy Scriptures; whence, moved with compunction, they might be inflamed to the love of Christ, and by it vanquish all the bitter and sweet things of the world. Blessed are the feet of those who are ready to hear the word of God; who, putting aside vanities, hasten to the Church, often apply themselves diligently to prayer, restrain their senses from wandering, so that they can say with a good conscience, *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep Thy word.*² Blessed are the feet which follow the steps of JESUS even to the Cross; and love rather to stand there, and to mourn with Mary, than to go to feasts, and to be present at spectacles.

19. Christ also suffered, and was grievously wounded, in His sacred Hands; with which He often gave a blessing, and touched and healed the infirm; with which He took bread, and ate, consecrated His Body, and delivered It to His disciples for their comfort. But, O loving God, why sufferest Thou Thy Hands to be pierced with so great pain, and to be bathed with such streams of blood, who didst lay out the heavens without labour, and adorn the earth with wondrous beauty? Alas, Holy God, Strong and Immortal! behold Thy Hands, which formed the first man in Paradise, without defect, free from every fault, now, sad to

The Hands of Christ.

¹ Ps. cxlvi. 7, 8.

² Ps. cxix. 101.

say! by treacherous men and unrighteous hands are pierced with the pointed spikes of the Jews; and before the eyes of Thy friends, extended on the Wood of the Cross, by all men then accursed, and counted as the greatest of scandals. But, O good and most sweet JESU, Thou wast willing most patiently to endure this injury and violence, for our first parents and their children; that Thou mightest rend asunder the handwriting of the decree, and wash away with Thy Blood original sin contracted by the touch of the forbidden tree, and the eating of the pernicious fruit; that from whence death sprung through transgression, health might return through punishment.¹ And therefore, at the demand of justice, Thou didst extend both Thy Hands upon the Wood of the Cross for the blotting out of sin; and for all sinners, at the call of charity, Thou didst pray with bloody Hands.

20. O, how grateful and acceptable was that Offering for us, when Thou, most loving JESU, Only Son of God, didst offer Thyself for a perpetual Sacrifice to appease the Face of God the Father Almighty, whom we all offend in many things; from which we cannot by ourselves be justified, save by the intervention of Thy most sacred Passion, and temporal Death, upon the Tree of the Cross; from whence proceeded our sanctification and redemption in the acquisition of eternal salvation! Observe here the grievousness of our sins, and the sharpness of the Wounds of Christ; the affection of His charity, and His supplication for His enemies, and also His benignity towards all who set themselves against Him. Most frequently did Christ pray, and His disciples He taught to pray, sometimes on bended knees, sometimes with His eyes raised to Heaven; but no where is He found to have prayed so mournfully and lovingly as He is now heard to do, when He prayed for His enemies on the Altar of the Cross with Hands outstretched, and Feet transfixed, and with all His members distended and wounded. For then poured He

¹ This is an allusion to the Hymn sung on Good Friday:—

“De parentis protoplasti
Fraude Factor condolens,
Quando pomi noxialis
In necem morsu ruit;
Ipse Lignum tunc notavit,
Damna ligni ut solveret.”

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forth the most sweet prayer in His Father's ears, that He would forgive those who were sinning against Him. Therefore, to restrain the malice of men, who are prone to anger, and slow to benefit their adversaries, Christ received the broadest wounds in His Hands, instructing all to do good and to bear evil; for it is counted by Him as the greatest gain, if any repays His enemies, not with the retaliation of revenge, but with the good office of prayer. Beware, therefore, wretched man, frail and full of faults, lest thou hurt or grieve any, by unkind word or wicked deed, for whom Christ suffered and died; for precious in His sight is every soul which believes faithfully on Him, and truly keeps His commandments. But it is just that thou feel well towards thy neighbour, and hope better things; because such an one is either good, or can quickly be ameliorated by grace. Do thou, therefore, shew charity, and pray also to God thy Father, that whom thou now hast as an adversary, thou mayest receive again as a reformed brother. But if he have done thee harm, forgive him from thy heart, for the love of Jesus Christ, who has in many things spared thee. For He was pitiful and merciful to all; He despised not the poor, He abhorred not the lepers, He derided not the weak, He soothed the sad, He appeased the angry, He bore with the perverse, He received the penitent, instructed the wandering, defended the innocent, strengthened the wavering, shewed charity to all; and, what is more wondrous still, when stricken with blows and wounds, ceased not from prayer. Behold, how Christ, by bearing with the wicked, and consoling the good, exhibited in His Passion an example of most excellent doctrine to the whole and the infirm; and, as it were, with both arms of His charity, drew towards Himself enemy and friend alike: not considering their offences, if only they would be reconciled to God, and forgive their debtors all their offences, and moreover preserve mutual charity.

21. Christ also suffered much in the way of punishment in His most holy Head, as in the principal member of His Body, for all His inferior members, which we are, who believe in Him, and by faith and love adhere to Him. For every one of the faithful ought, as a living and

The Head of
Christ.

sound member, to suffer and be wounded in mind with Christ His Head in all His sorrows; because a member which does not suffer and groan with its head when hurt and sick, is either corrupt or unsound. Therefore, if thou art a member of Christ, and livest and savourest of the Spirit of Christ, consider now the Head of Christ, the Son of the living God, and see with how many sharp points of the thorns it is pierced in every part for thy sins. It is not easy to say how grievous, how long, how sharp this pain was, in the blessed and august Head of JESUS, consecrated above all the heads of Saints and Nazarenes; whose most holy crown the sharp razor never touched; nor did a hair of His Head fall to the earth; unless perchance the impious Jews, with the servants of the governor, drew in their rage some hairs from His holy Head, or, again, plucked some, with sacrilegious hands, from His holy beard. For they are considered to have inflicted upon Christ numerous contumelies and blows, which are not severally enumerated by the Evangelists. However, St. Luke says, that many other things blasphemously spake they against Him.¹ For some openly derided Christ as a fool; others, yet more perverse, added contumelious words; others, more cruel than beasts, gnashed with their teeth, and inflicted on Him no few blows; nay, perchance they stamped with their heels upon the sacred Feet of JESUS, which but lately Mary Magdalene washed with many tears, and anointed. Ah, Lord God! how deeply did the sharp points of the thorns enter Thy most holy Head! how cruelly did they hurt the delicate skin of Thy flesh, with the bones and nerves! so that from the wounds which they inflicted, torrents of blood flowed over Thy Neck, and Eyes, and Ears, and Face, and wholly marred Thy gracious Countenance, and all Thy former beauty! O wicked and exasperating generation, why dost thou so severely punish the Innocent One? Why oppress the Tender-hearted and Lowly, and torture His Head, as with a circlet? False, truly, is the capital charge which thou bringest against Him, that He made Himself a king; for never did He bear kingly ornaments like some great one of the world; nor did He wear sandals, nor desire a crown. No man also did He hurt by

¹ S. Luke xxii. 65.

word or deed; but rather freely healed those who were hurt and oppressed by the devil.

22. Daughters of Jerusalem, and all devout Matrons, come and see Christ the King, JESUS of Nazareth, the true and pacific Solomon, sprung of the royal stock of David; see how, in the day of His crowning, He is crowned with a thorny crown by his step-mother,¹ the wicked synagogue, at the persuasion of the devil, and violently urged on by the envy of the priests. Then wept most abundantly His Mother, the most Blessed Mary, with St. Mary Magdalene, and all their company, in grievous desolation; then wept, too, His scattered disciples amongst the crowd of Jews, for confusion and sorrow at the sight of the thorny crown, which was most cruelly pressed down upon the sacred Head of Christ, their Lord and Master, while the judge cried out, in the presence of the raging people, *Behold your King!*²

23. Consider now, ye faithful of Christ, if ye ever heard or read of such contumely, so exceeding sharp a punishment, in any of the former holy kings and prophets, as is now instanced in the Lord of Prophets, the King of Angels, the Chief of all Priests, the Lamb of God, who came to take away the sins of the world, by the various torments of bodily suffering. Lo, He who formerly shone glorious in signs and mighty wonders, is now most irreverently treated with many mockings, and is stricken with rods and scourges: Him whom princes were bound chiefly to honour and to receive for their true King and High Priest, they now dishonour with unheard-of insults, and torture with a crown of most cruel sharpness. For in every thing do they take a contrary part, upon whom so many benefits have been conferred, and rage with all the greater bitterness against the Author of their own salvation. For in place of roses and lilies, they offer Him sharp thorns; for jewels and pearls, they give Him savage blows in the face; for a royal crown, a garland of sea-rushes;³ for a golden chain, a buffet without pity; for a stole of fine linen, a fool's white robe with ignominy; for the kingly purple, drops of ruddy blood; for a silver girdle, a linen cloth of slender texture; for a royal sceptre, a reed shaken with the

¹ Vid. Cant. iii. 11.² S. John xix. 14.³ *juncis marinis.*

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wind: for a horse, He had an ass; for a bridle, a piece of rope; for a sword, a rod; for a shield, a scourge; for greaves, naked legs; for gloves, chains upon His Hands; for golden spurs, iron spikes through His Feet; for a standard of war, the Cross with the written title; for a breastplate, a coat without seam; for a helmet, a veil over the eyes; for a royal lance, the soldier's spear; for the pontifical mitre, a napkin about His naked Head; for the Doctor's Chair, the marble pillar; for the goblet-cup, the sponge; for the flagon, the vinegar-cup; for wine, vinegar; for nectar, myrrh; for mead, most bitter gall; for a kiss, spitting; for compassion, the dart of derision; for a farewell, He received the word of cursing.

24. Besides these now mentioned, listen yet to other things, which aggravated His extreme desolation. For He was forsaken of His Father in His greatest need, as though He were not His Well-Beloved Son. He was forsaken of all His friends and disciples, as any guest or stranger. He lost the best companions; He found the worst enemies. He lost holy Peter, His champion; He received Malchus, Peter's accuser. What more? For keeper of His revenues, He had a thief; for secretary, a traitor; for standard-bearer, Simon of Cyrene, who carried His Cross; for chamberlain, a wicked thief, who reviled Him; for an infirmarian, a mocker; for a master of the robes, a stripper; for a purveyor, a mixer of gall; for a sleeping-chamber, a sepulchre; for a couch, a hard stone hewn out of the rock. Howbeit, amongst these ills done against Christ the Lord, there were not wanting the pious lamentations of friends: but they concealed themselves, and stood afar off; they were silent, and mourned. For never was seen so great an evil in Israel, from the day on which JESUS was born in Bethlehem. But all these things were done, by the Divine appointment, for our salvation, and to fulfil the sacred oracles of the Prophets. Behold, in this armour was Christ our King, JESUS of Nazareth, arrayed, when He went to battle against the Prince of this world, and to redeem mankind with His precious Blood. He strove even to death; He conquers the pride of the devil by humility, the cruelty of the world by patience, the wantonness of the

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flesh by the most bitter penalty of the Cross. He has left to us examples of holy living, sacred and good words for meditation; and against the several vices He has given the best of remedies, for avoidance of sin, and the attainment, by the Cross, of the prize of eternal life. To Whom be praise and glory, for all His good, in heaven and in earth, for ever and ever. Amen.

I.

(1st for Palm Sunday.)

ON THE FEAST OF PALMS; OF THE PROCESSION OF CHRIST; AND
OF THE SIX KINDS OF MEN WHO WAIT ON CHRIST.

*The children of the Hebrews took up olive-branches, and went to meet the Lord.*¹

IT is delightful to contemplate, on the present Feast of Palms, the solemn Procession of Holy Church; and the devotion of the people of the Jews, who attended Christ with great joy and honour. For what the Jews formerly in a bodily manner manifested towards Christ, whilst living in the flesh, we ought also in a spiritual manner to manifest towards Him now reigning in Heaven. And with so much greater affection does it become us to do so, with hymns and devout songs, in proportion as God loves more the interior service of our heart, and desires to lead us to the supernal Jerusalem. For this cause principally came He upon the earth, that He might recal the inhabitants of the earth to Heaven. For this cause did He hasten to the place of His Passion, that He might prepare for us a seat of a most blissful mansion in the Heavens. In token of which also, He commanded an ass and her colt to be brought for Him; and modestly riding, He conducted them to Jerusalem the earthly city, which contains the image of celestial blessedness, that we might have the hope of being brought back by Christ into eternal life, with the Holy Angels; Who shall raise our animal body from the dust of the earth, and clothe it in the glory of immortality in the future resurrection

¹ Vid. S. Matt. xxi. 8, 15.

of the just. And who shall be worthy to merit this? Truly, whosoever shall humble himself as a little child in the number of the Hebrew children; and be made as it were a meek beast under the Feet of Christ, shewing himself ready at every place and time for the good pleasure of God. For whosoever shall shew himself meek and lowly amongst his brethren, and count himself as it were an untrained ass and unprofitable servant, by reason of any vice or inaptitude which he beholds in himself; such an one, by his lowly thoughts of himself, is more pleasing to Christ, and shall be nearer to Him, than that proud Pharisee, who, like a pampered horse, boasted himself of his good work. The simplicity of the ass is more excusable, if he errs, than the perverseness of the proud horse, who recalcitrates. Christ therefore chose an ass to sit upon, on account of its gentleness; He refused the horse, which is apt to neigh and bite others. So also now Christ takes to Himself the simple and lowly, to serve Him; and places the yoke of holy Religion upon his back; that by the law of life and discipline, he may go along a straight and plain road to the celestial Jerusalem after his death.

2. Consider, therefore, what and how great virtues Christ shews to us by His Humanity in this His Passion, who, when He was supreme, and rich and powerful above all, seeing that He was the Very Son of God according to His Divinity; yet made not a show of the excellence of His Majesty in the sight of the people, by any worldly parade; but with much lowliness and gentleness proceeded to the city which was rebelling against Himself. This is our King, whom John Baptist preached, the Lamb of God which was to come into the world; who for the salvation of mankind came to the place of His Passion, that He might accomplish the work of our redemption, as had been revealed to the Holy Patriarchs and Prophets. He turned not aside from the face of His enemies; nor abhorred the Holy Place on account of the malice of the people; but with greatest charity and loving-kindness He approached the envious and passionate, that He might allay the disturbance of their minds: moreover, He sorrowed and wept for their future excesses and ills. He heeded not the applause and praise of men, but had His Eye open to the future dangers of the perfi-

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dious, speaking thus to them whilst they were rejoicing in security; If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which await thee, truly thou wouldest rather sorrow and weep with Me. For the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.¹ For by mourning, the mind of the offender is corrected; and by mirth, the whole religious mind is unnerved. And so much farther does man become removed from God, and colder in himself, as he is more busily and for a longer time engaged in external occupation. The Lord, therefore, gave good counsel to those who are held in honour and esteem of men, and take delight in the society of their friends, that they turn away their eyes from present things; and ponder with intent thought how suddenly these frivolous joys pass away. Wherefore, let the distracted mind recur to the works of Christ done on this day; let it cast away all secular occupations; let it collect the flowers of good thoughts from the Holy Scriptures, and hasten to meet the Heavenly King with interior exercises, as with verdant palms. But if it see any exterior things pertaining to the Feast, or hear them in the course of the chanting, let it not be content to stop there, but let it diligently inquire what saving mystery is contained therein.

3. We must observe, therefore, that in Christ's Procession of this day are found six kinds of good men, who wait on Christ, at His approach, by some act of piety. Some go before, some follow after; some cut down branches, others strew their garments in the way; some bear their King, and some walk by His side. None here stands idle, none gives heed to stories; each holds his place, every one joyfully discharges his duty. Now, in their mystic and moral meaning, these things suggest much beautiful thought; and for the instruction of faith and discipline of conduct may be thus interpreted. Those, then, who go before Christ are the Patriarchs and Prophets; who foretold many mysteries to the people concerning Christ, and desired with great desire to see Christ. But they who follow Christ are His disciples, and the rest of the faithful converted by Christ; who, leaving their wealth and the cares of the world, have perfectly imitated Christ, and drawn many others, by word

¹ Ecces. vii. 4.

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and example, to a good life. They, again, who cut down branches from the trees, are the Rulers of Churches, and the Preachers of the word of God throughout the world; who cull by study, from the Holy Books and the treatises of Doctors, beauteous and profitable sentences, as it were the flowers and leaves of trees; which afterwards they preach, and faithfully expound, in the Church before the people. And lest infirm or undisciplined hearers should strike their feet in the way against a stone of offence, by reason of the hardness of the precepts; therefore, to smooth the road of the heavenly life, the good Doctors bring forth many examples of Saints, as flowers of roses and lilies of the valley; now adducing the patience of Martyrs, now the labours of Confessors, now the chastity of Virgins. But they who strew their garments in the way are the good dispensers of temporal things; who refresh the poor and mendicants with meat and drink, lest by reason of their daily labours they faint by the way. These, then, take some necessities from their own superfluities, as well out of their raiment as of their purse, which they mercifully bestow upon the naked and needy; that so by earthly alms, offered for Christ, they may, after the burial of their bodies, receive eternal rewards in the Kingdom of God. There were formerly many in Holy Church thus fervently inflamed with divine love, who not only gave their external and temporal goods to the poor, or, in fulfilment of their vow, bequeathed all; but also in time of persecution delivered up their bodies, for the Faith of Christ, to divers torments. These, certainly, in the way of God and the Procession of Christ, above all other contemnners of the world, prostrated and cast from them upon the earth their bodies, as if they had been but the covering and oppressive burden of their souls, to be trodden upon by bad men, to the end they might receive unfading crowns in heavenly joys with the Holy Angels, for all the tortures inflicted on them for a season. They, again, who carry Christ are the ass and her colt, having indeed upon them the garments of the Apostles, but advancing to the Kingdom of Christ. By these are represented the good and devout Religious, who renounce the world, and, called to Christ by the teaching of the Apostles, enter the Monastic state; its sweet yoke and light burden they take upon themselves in conformity

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to rule, loving chastity, observing obedience, and living under the discipline of their superiors; keeping the bit of silence in their mouth, and with lowliness bending their back and neck under the rod to correction; and bearing all these things lovingly and cheerfully, through the period of their whole life, for the sake of Christ, who called them from the vanity of the world, and hired them to His service.

4. They, however, who walk in the way near the King are the Apostles, and these snatch glimpses of His Countenance, beholding it from one side. These are they, the contemplative, wholly detached from actions of the world; singularly devoted to solitude and silence, continually intent on prayer, sacred reading, meditation; and, by frequent sighs, fervently aspiring after heavenly things, they desire with extreme longing to behold Christ in His glory; and keeping themselves by a special grace intimately recollected, and at times suddenly transported out of themselves in the Spirit, they contemplate for a brief interval the Face of Christ, as it were with a side-glance. For, in comparison of the greatness of this pleasure, counting as nothing and of no moment all visible and created goods, they despise them, and cast away every thing which draws them back from their Sovereign Good, and hinders disengagement for God.

5. Collect from what has been said, that there are two orders of those who praise God; one which goes before, another which follows Christ. And these all sing harmoniously with one voice; all preach that Christ has come in the flesh; and confess Christ the King, born of the seed of David. By those Singers are fitly represented the Ministers of Holy Church, ordained to the singing and celebration of the Divine Office; who chant, at certain times, after hymns and other canticles, portions of the histories of the Old and New Testament, uttered to the praise of God; and singing with ready heart and mouth, study to lift up themselves and others to the heavenly promises; lest, wearied with the irksomeness and labour of the present life, they be retarded in their arrival at the celestial Jerusalem, whither Christ, the King of Israel, our Creator, of His own accord went before us by the Cross to-day. Each, according to his condition and rank and office, shall receive his

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proper reward, according to his labour. Therefore ought every faithful servant of God, be he Cleric or tonsured Monk, or beneficed Priest, to be very diligent and active in singing in the Church, in the sight of Christ and His Saints; and let him take example by the Hebrew children, who lauded Christ with a loud voice, even to the highest Heaven. For as often as any Cleric or Monk chants in choir with too little spirit, or lowers his voice, or, again, busied with vain fancies, is thinking of other things, and is negligent in his attention to the several divine words; so often does he lose a precious pearl from the crown of his head, and permits a beauteous and fragrant rose to be stolen and carried off by the enemy from the Sanctuary of God. Therefore let the Religious brother of the choir beware, distinguished, as he is, by the badge of Christ's title, ordained of God to psalmody and prayer, that, as soon as the bell is sounded for the Canonical Hours, he come not late to choir, nor continue there with weariness and a distracted mind; lest perchance the wily foe privily enter, and take away the psalm out of his mouth or the sense out of his heart; lest by carelessness he lose the merit of his holy labour; and offend Christ and His Holy Angels, as one who has ill discharged his duty. Thus much for the praises and songs of the good children, to excite the devotion of all Religious.

6. But now I would fain regard somewhat more freely the apparel and state of our lowly King, sitting upon the ass's colt; who, though He was in the midst of a rejoicing people, shewed no smile, but wept. No where in all the records of the Old Testament, do I find any of the kings of Israel, or Jerusalem, riding in such lowly guise, or advancing to meet their enemies without warlike arms and sounding trumpets. No where even in the whole Life of Christ do I meet with any conduct of the like kind, as is now to-day shewn by our Saviour, in the presence of so great a multitude of people uniting in His praise. Exceedingly amazing, therefore, are the circumstances of an event so strange. We read, lastly, that JESUS went frequently through towns and villages, preaching the word of God; He was even wearied with His journey; but yet I perceive not, that He employed the service of any beast, that He might sit more commodiously, or arrive more speedily at the desired place.

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But who has understood the thoughts of the Lord? or who was His counsellor in this matter? I believe, and observe, that this was the divine counsel, that the sacred word of prophecy, long before spoken, might be fulfilled; that Christ, the King of Israel, should come in lowly attire, and in the spirit of gentleness. Many, perchance, were ignorant of whom the Prophet spoke; but when Christ by Himself fulfilled in deed what the Prophet had before literally expressed in words, then undoubtingly they believed, and plainly understood, that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him, as Blessed John testifies.¹ Christ the King, therefore, the Lord of kings, came not with a mighty hand to terrify men, as is the way with princes of this world, but to give an example of humility, by which they might easily advance to the celestial Kingdom. For there is a great difference between the King of Heaven and the king of the world, between the poor Christ and the rich Solomon. For Solomon, on his way to his kingdom in Jerusalem, was placed upon King David's mule;² but Christ, going to fight against the devil, sat upon an ass's colt. The one went up with trumpets sounding, the other with children singing. The one rejoiced, arrayed in regal trappings, the other wept over the danger of the city in which David reigned thirty and three years. By which act, indeed, He shewed that He belonged to the lineage of David, who, claiming the heritage of His fathers, entered the Temple of Solomon; which He also honoured, rendering it illustrious by glorious miracles and doctrines, healing the sick, and teaching the people. Whence also the people, at the approach of Christ, their King, with much triumphant joy, cried out, Blessed be the Kingdom of our father David, that cometh: Hosanna in the highest!

7. But it seems wonderful, how it was that a simple and unlearned people blushed not at so poor a King, nor was offended at His mean apparel. For nought of royal nobility shone forth outwardly in Him; but even as before He had been in the habit of going with naked feet and uncovered head, so now without royal ornament He advances to the royal city. Neither are they offended in Him because He comes as a

¹ S. John xii. 16.² 1 Kings i. 38.

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poor man ; but they turned the eyes of their mind to the signs of His Deity, and were the more edified with the simplicity of His attire. O Jerusalem, behold the lowliness, and gentleness, and justice, and poverty of thy King, above all the kings of the earth ! For, lo ! He comes without a body-guard of valiant warriors, without the sound of trumpets, without horses and mules, without sword and coat-of-mail, without shield and lance, without bow and arrow, without golden crown, without mitre, without chaplet, without belt, without cloak, without hat or hood, without greaves, without bridle, without spurs, without standard, without sceptre ; without aught of secular tumult and military pomp. For all such things pertain not to His care and service ; who came to preach, by word and example, contempt of the world. But He employed, to carry Him, a sorry beast of burden, in token of poverty and innocence ; that by His lowly deportment He might shew Himself to be rather pitiful and loving, than a terrible King and austere Lord. He chose as His companions poor and defenceless men ; the rich and powerful He sent away ; even because His Kingdom was not of this world, but of Heaven from everlasting. He had many things contrary to earthly kings and princes ; because He came to call the humble and poor, of which class were His disciples ; to whom He promised to give the Kingdom of God, which none shall be able by violence to take from them. To which may He vouchsafe to bring us by His grace, even JESUS Christ, the Saviour of the world, the King of glory ; Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

II.

(2d for Palm Sunday.)

OF CHRIST RIDING, NOT IN THE CHARIOT OF PHARAOH, BUT
ON THE ASS OF LOWLINESS.

Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her; loose them and bring them unto Me.¹

WHAT is this, most sweet JESU, my King and my God, that Thou sendest Thy disciples for an ass, and not for a horse, to wait upon Thee along this way, which Thou hast often walked with naked feet? Why shewest Thou Thyself poor and needy in all things, whose are all things in Heaven and in earth, as well men as beasts? When Thou wast born in Bethlehem Judah, Thou soughtest not a stately palace, but a mean stable, for Thy dwelling-place, and a narrow manger in which to rest; and now, proceeding to Jerusalem, Thou sendest for an ass straightway to be given up to Thee. I am overcome with wonder, and I sorrow in Thy poverty, that Thou, the King of all the earth, actest with such innocence, and delightest to go forth without royal apparel. O God, was there none of all Thy friends, in Bethany and in Bethphage, to prepare for Thee a chariot, or give up to Thee a single horse, that even thus Thou mightest ride more honourably into Jerusalem, and leave that ass alone? Which of the kings acted thus? We read in the books of the Kings, that to Solomon were brought many horses out of Egypt,² bought at a great price; and how happened it that not even one remained for the service of Thy approach? A rare and strange spectacle, unheard of since the world began, that the King of ages should not have in His whole host a single horse to ride a short way, but only an ass's colt whereon never man sat; who had neither saddle to sit on, nor bridle to hold. O wondrous clemency of God! the Author of the world vouchsafed to become the rider of an ass, when making His entrance into the renowned Jerusalem.

2. But there are many causes, and very pregnant with

¹ S. Matt. xxi. 2.

² 2 Chron. ix. 28.

reason and mystic power, of His mounting an ass rather than a horse. Christ acted thus by the Wisdom of the Father, that the prophecy concerning His Advent might not only be fulfilled by mystic words, but also might be shewn to men for a testimony by some external act. He also gave in this the highest example of true humility and holy poverty, to restrain the pride and avarice of men, who take delight in honours, and riches, and family greatness; seeking temporal glory, and the conveniences of a delicate life. For if our King, the Lord JESUS Christ, had employed in His retinue a beautiful horse, who is there so poor that would not be ambitious of riding, and say: Christ did so; why, then, may not I? For the senses of men are prone to evil, and nearly all aspire after a high condition. But now Christ, the lowly and gentle King, was content to ride upon an ass, even as the Holy Ghost foretold concerning Him; Who rests upon the lowly and peaceable, and treads down the necks of the proud and lofty, by His own power; Who overthrows the backs of kings, and turns aside perverse and false minds. Our King, therefore, God from everlasting, and born Man in the end of time, would shew Himself such to men, in every word, action, and gesture, from His Nativity even to the hour of His Death; that He might be to all an example of virtue and holiness, as well to inferiors as to superiors. He shewed the way of true humility in the apparel of His singular poverty; by which, also, any poor man whatever might ascend by a direct road to the celestial Jerusalem, without horse, without chariot, without ass, without mule, without scrip, without money, without place of dignity, without fine linen, without purple. Since He is Himself the Leader, Companion, and Forerunner of this holy journey; Himself the Protector and Governor, who, sent by the Father, came into this world, that the way of humility, by which we arrive securely in Heaven, He might make plain and smooth.

3. Let the poor attend to this, and be joyful; let the meek hear and receive comfort; because, for the consolation of the poor, our King, the Lord JESUS Christ, when He was rich and Prince of all, was made poor and patient for us; that by His poverty He might make us rich in grace, and, of little, great in glory. He therefore Himself came to men in the

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likeness of the poor, lived poor amongst men, died poor for men. No city had He, nor castle, nor house of His own, for an illustrious inheritance; and yet is He honoured to-day by the poor and simple, and, with loud acclamations, saluted King of Israel. Lastly, that He might manifest the nobility of His poverty, and make it lovely to all princes of the world, instead of a horse of pride He had an ass's colt; for captains and soldiers, poor unknown disciples, unlearned fishermen; for armour-bearers and shield-bearers, simple people, shoemakers and weavers; for singers and trumpeters, innocent children, crying out, Hosanna; for swords and staves, branches of palms and olives, which were emblems of joy and peace, not of battle nor strife. Christ therefore came, the noble and peaceful King, the Only-Begotten and Beloved Son of the Eternal Father, desiring to restore peace between God and men, between Angels and sinners, between Jews and Gentiles. Fear not, therefore, daughter of Sion; but be glad and rejoice, O Jerusalem, thou holy city, for He comes not to chasten thee, but to pray for thy sins; not to dissolve the Law, but to fulfil it; not to destroy the place, but to rescue it from the power of the devil; not to contend with words, but to instruct in conduct: He came not to oppress by power, but to save by clemency; not to seek vengeance for injury inflicted on Him, but to suffer the Cross and death for iniquity committed. Understand from His miracles, how He shines conspicuous above all Holy Patriarchs and Prophets; and believe, that He is truly the Son of God, co-equal with the Father, born of a Virgin for the salvation of the world, to die for the redemption of all.

4. Consider, from the works of His Humanity, that He is meek and lowly, despising the glory of the world, enduring reproaches, returning good for evil. Behold, even as He is Himself, so also are His servants. He chose for His soldiers and barons men adorned with virtues, not with costly robes; who knew how to strive against the devil by prayer; to subjugate the flesh by fasting; and to vanquish the riches and honours of the world by despising them, even as they learnt from Himself, and taught many others, to wage spiritual war. To these are joined good children, strangers to malice and

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contention, singing and praising the Name of the Lord, because great is the glory of the Lord. For, from the greatest even to the least, all are employed in praise and thanksgiving; and at the sight and approach of their King, exult in their heart, clap with their hands, dance and sing with loud voices, blessing God for all the mighty acts and signs which they had seen and heard of Christ the King in their borders. Oh, how amazing, and worthy of all praise, was that devotion! How pleasant that jubilant joy of heart, whilst the lowly JESUS, the Son of the Eternal King, is escorted by innocent children into the Temple of Solomon, and into the place of His wondrous tabernacle; where, in figure of His blessed Passion, the sacrifices of cattle were offered by the Priests of the Mosaic law; who yet could not cleanse any perfectly from transgressions, according to the righteousness which is of the flesh; but according to the faith of the offerers, through hope in Christ of the salvation to be given, there was a firm expectation of the remission of sins, and of the consolation of human redemption. For after this procession and manifestation of singular honour, a few days having elapsed, greater was the confusion and torment with which He was filled, than had ever before been the honour with which He was received by the crowds. Finally, assailed with many injuries and stripes, He was hung upon the Cross, that the verity of the flesh which He had assumed might be clearly shewn, and the figure of the legal sacrifice, of the immolation of the Paschal lamb, accomplished.

5. These two works, therefore, of Christ, His Procession and Passion, are remembered every where to-day in Holy Church, and contain in themselves great mysteries, sufficiently expressed by the holy Dolours.¹ For the condition of Holy Church is represented in these two things; which, by means of prosperity and adversity, is wont to be frequently exercised by God. The Procession, which is emblematic of joy, is therefore made and celebrated with branches of palms, to excite the hearts of the faithful to the love of celestial joys. But this Procession shall then be most perfectly fulfilled, when all the Saints, raised from the dead, shall meet Christ in the air

¹ sanctis Doloribus.

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with their glorious bodies. Then, amidst the songs of Angels, the Elect shall enter into the Holy of Holies, having palms in their hands, and burning lamps full of oil. Then shall each receive eternal rewards for their labours and merits, perfectly content in their mansions prepared for them by God. But the Passion, which follows the Procession, signifies this: that by the Cross and Passion of Christ, and by many tribulations for Christ, the way is pointed out to us, whereby we arrive after death at the Kingdom of God. In which they shall for ever rejoice with Christ who now devoutly remember His Passion, groan with compassion, pour forth tears of love; in imitation of Him macerate their flesh; in thanksgiving offer prayers, hear Mass gladly, celebrate it with fear and reverence; abstain from vain and idle pursuits; prepare themselves for Divine grace, by keeping guard over their heart; and, in commemoration of the Passion of Christ, by earnestly and mournfully meditating, reading, labouring, enduring, piously exercise their mind in such sort that, being conformed in their inmost soul to the Sufferings of Christ in the present world, they may in the next be more highly glorified. For when Christ shall come to recompense the labours of all His Elect, then He shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. The present Procession has but short-lived joy; but the future Procession of the Saints obtains everlasting praise. For truly no festivity is more solemn, no fellowship more pleasant, no delight greater, no contemplation more excellent, no felicity more worthy, than to see Christ in His celestial glory with His Holy Angels, when all the Elect shall be gathered together in the supernal and most blessed City of Jerusalem, to reign with Christ for ever and ever; whilst the impious and infidels are delivered over with the devil to eternal fires, and justly damned. From which evils may He guard and preserve us, and rather gather us together with His Elect, and place us on His Right Hand in His Kingdom, Who by His Passion and Cross has vouchsafed to redeem us, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. XII.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF THOMAS À KEMPIS AND S. BERNARD;
FOR EASTER.

I.

Homily of Thomas à Kempis.

(1st for Easter.)

OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AND THE SPIRITUAL
CONSOLATION OF THE SOUL.

*I have risen, and I am yet with thee, Alleluia:*¹

IS the voice of Christ to His Church, and to every faithful soul, which is weighed down with exceeding sorrow at His Passion, and as it were deprived of all consolation. Her, therefore, Christ rising from death accosts in spirit; her He most graciously consoles with the gladdening address of His lips, saying: ‘I have risen, and am yet with thee. I have not forgotten thee; but, mindful of My promise, I appear to thee as the most victorious Conqueror of death, and I announce to thee the joys of eternal blessedness, that thou mayest rejoice with Me in the ineffable glory of My Resurrection, which I have entered upon; because this I shall never lose, nor die any more. Greatly indeed didst thou sorrow and weep yesterday for My Passion; but now weep no longer, for I am risen indeed; and I am yet with thee in the Presence of My Majesty, I who suffered in the weakness of the flesh.

¹ The first words of the Introit for Easter Day.

For Easter.

‘ Now am I with higher glory crowned, and clad in the light
‘ of immortality, I who two days since hung upon the Cross,
‘ condemned to a most shameful death. I have lain three
‘ days in the Sepulchre; but now I live, saith the Lord Thy
‘ Redeemer, that thou mayest live for My sake.

2. ‘ I rose to-day from the dead by the glory of the Father ;
‘ and thou shalt rise in the last day with My Elect, to be raised
‘ by the Divine power from the tomb, and to receive a crown
‘ for thy deserts. Be joyful, therefore, with the voice of exulta-
‘ tion, and with great thanksgiving perform devout canticles of
‘ praise, singing alleluia, and lifting thyself on high to the
‘ festivals above. Rejoice in heart and voice together, O
‘ daughter of Sion, because the hour of temporal sadness is at
‘ an end, and the day of perpetual joy has returned, the hope
‘ of thy future glory. Let the Jews be sad, who crucified Me ;
‘ let the Gentiles be confounded, who derided Me ; let all fear
‘ who would not believe on Me. But let the faithful be glad,
‘ who love Me ; let all the people be comforted, who, on hear-
‘ ing of My Passion, have mourned and wept. Let My disciples
‘ approach Me, who were dispersed and had fled, and left Me
‘ in the midst of My tortures ; let the lowly and devout come
‘ to Me ; let My Priests and Ministers go forth arrayed in
‘ robes of white. Let every Christian with supreme reverence
‘ approach My Table ; and let all people celebrate this Paschal
‘ Day, on which I have risen.

3. ‘ For I am the Resurrection and the Life : I am the
‘ Living Bread, which came down from Heaven, who give Life
‘ to the world. I am the Good Shepherd, who feed My simple
‘ and obedient sheep, which forsake their own will, and follow
‘ Mine in all things. I am the hidden Manna, the Joy of An-
‘ gels, the Passover of Christians, the felicity of Saints ; re-
‘ joicing the Angels with open vision, and on earth receiving
‘ men to the Communion of My Sacrament. Be not troubled,
‘ therefore, as though despised in the world. Be not sad, as
‘ though abandoned of God ; fear not, as though encom-
‘ passed by thine enemies. I have not forsaken thee, nor
‘ will I. I have not cast thee away, nor will I. But
‘ in many things will I prove thee, and by various tempta-
‘ tions lead thee, and will try thee in the fire as gold, and

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‘refine thee. And in the time of tribulation I will appear
‘to thee, and comfort thee with My Presence, pouring in the
‘grace of devotion; first giving thee to drink the wine of com-
‘punction, then anointing thee with the oil of gladness, that
‘thou mayest shed tears, and experience wondrous sweetness,
‘and be wholly set on fire and dissolved. Thus, thus, will I
‘console those who mourn over Me, in this vale of tears; who
‘turn away from levities, and apply themselves to their interior
‘life. I have a care for thee, and Mine eyes are towards My
‘faithful, that they may sit with Me in My Father’s Kingdom,
‘and behold My brightness, which I have had from eternity,
‘and have prepared for My friends. I will give them a full
‘reward, when they shall rise from the dead, themselves also
‘glorious and incorruptible. For this suffered I death, broke
‘the power of hell, vanquished the devil, rescued the holy
‘Fathers from their prison, opened the gates of Paradise, that
‘I might introduce My Elect to eternal blessedness.

4. ‘But regard not thyself as severed from this delight,
‘nor a stranger to the happy fellowship of the Saints. For,
‘although thou art still surrounded with mortality, and livest
‘in the midst of temptations, yet afterwards thou shalt enjoy
‘My vision, if thou shalt continue faithful and constant,
‘following My steps even to the end; even as I also con-
‘tinued in the love of My Father, obeying Him even to death.
‘Be strong, therefore, in temptation, and patient in every
‘tribulation, that thou mayest be made partaker of My eternal
‘glory. Neither despair, whatsoever adversity may be coming
‘upon thee, and though all human consolation be leaving thee.
‘It is not My wont to pass by the sorrowful, nor to despise
‘him who prays, but to listen with loving-kindness to him who
‘cries to Me with groaning. I prove him who strives, I will
‘crown him who perseveres. I permit him whom I love to
‘suffer tribulation for a while, and, whilst he least expects it,
‘and supposes himself unworthy of any consolation, I suddenly
‘appear to him, and enlighten him in his lack of knowledge.
‘Thus did I with My disciples, and with the women, the be-
‘loved visitants of My Holy Sepulchre. For they were in
‘great sorrow, they lost all hope, they knew no comfort; what
‘to do, or whether to go, they could not tell. Nothing was

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‘sweeter to them, in the mean time, than to weep bitterly, and
‘often to seek, if they might gain any tidings of Me. But
‘whilst all human aid failed them, presently the Divine was
‘with them. And much more happily did it fall out for them
‘than they could have expected. For I caused My Angels to
‘go before Me, to tell the good news; that they might remain
‘no longer without consolation, but, raised to the hope of
‘life, might look for the King of Glory.

5. ‘I did not, therefore, appear at once, that their desire
‘of seeking Me might increase, and that they might be more
‘purified for the sight of Me: that so, on seeing Me, they
‘might the more abundantly rejoice, the more devoutly em-
‘brace, and the more reverently adore. I knew the time
‘and the mode of consoling the sorrowful, and how much
‘the minds of men could bear. It was not, then, that I de-
‘spised the vows of the pious, nor rejected the labour of the
‘distressed; but I proved their faith; I instructed their ignor-
‘ance; I strengthened their pusillanimity; I inflamed their
‘love; I repelled their fear. Therefore by weeping, praying,
‘seeking, knocking, persevering, they obtained grace to see
‘Whom they longed for. And I fulfilled My words, which
‘I spoke before, saying: I will see you again; and your heart
‘shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.¹ Do
‘thou, therefore, on hearing these things, prepare thyself for the
‘grace of devotion: expect patiently, until I come and again
‘visit thy heart, freeing thee from every trouble, and bringing
‘thee forth into a state of fresh exultation. Then shalt thou
‘be able joyfully to sing, and to understand by experience,
‘how true and pleasant is that Introit: I have risen, and am
‘still with thee: Alleluia.’

¹ S. John xvi. 22.

II.

Homily of Thomas à Kempis.

(2d for Easter.)

OF JOY IN THE LORD'S RESURRECTION.

*This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*¹

GREAT, indeed, is the spiritual joy which the most solemn Paschal Feast administers to us. We must rejoice, therefore, in it, not according to the flesh, nor according to the vanity of the world, but according to God, in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Now more abundant grace is to be sought, and sincerer purity to be observed. Now, in the zeal of a new conversation, the mind is to be transported to heavenly desire. For the Lord hath made this day to us with good reason most solemn and most holy, that so we may rejoice in it, above all festivals of the year. Let all, let each now say: Hail, thou brightest of days, which hath shone upon us after the black night of hell. For our Lord Himself Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, and Prince of the kings of the earth, hath risen to-day from death; and upon all the faithful throughout the world who believe on Him, He hath conferred the hope of eternal life. Since by His Resurrection with the flesh, which He took of the Virgin Mary, and offered for us on the Cross, the hand-writing of our condemnation was blotted out; and the way to Eternity is opened to us, through the conquest of death. Open thy mouth, therefore, O devout soul, and sing with elevated voice in union with the whole Catholic Church, and in true joyfulness of heart: *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it: Alleluia.*

2. O truly sweet and notable verse, which is so joyfully sung, so frequently repeated in the Canonical Hours, and with its proper chant excites devotion, and reassembles the scattered, drawing them most eagerly to the love of Christ! Do thou, therefore, not only listen to the melody which sounds sweetly to the outward ears, but attend to the meaning of the holy words which is hidden within; and through the

¹ Ps. cxviii. 24. (Antiphon in the Office of Easter Day.)

sweetness of the chant mount up to the inward devotion of thy mind, that thou lose not the profit of the exercise through attention to the clearness of the voice, when thou art commanded in the Holy Spirit to sing to God, and to be jubilant in thy heart to the Lord alone. Blessed is he who is occupied in these good things, and applies his whole intention to the joys of the internal festival; that so through the festivals of time he may tend towards eternal glory, according to the words of the Apostle: *If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above; set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*¹ I know not what is sung more joyful and festive in the whole year, than what occurs in the celebration of these Paschal days. For the voice and song of all repeatedly chant forth, alleluia; and alleluia is the end of every thing. In which practice is represented to us, in a figure, what shall be our employment in the eternal life; when, rescued from present sorrows, and translated to celestial rest, we shall praise God with His Holy Angels, filled for eternity with our Sovereign Good. Worthily therefore and adoringly do Heaven and earth, with all their fulness, rejoice in the Resurrection of Christ, and are commanded to praise God; by whom has been conferred upon us such a precious abundance of spiritual benefits, the earnest of yet greater and higher, which shall be rendered in the end.

3. Behold, now the elements, which were fast locked in the frost of winter, gradually dissolve, and assume a form of vernal joyousness, suited to the coming festivity. For the earth, long barren and uncultivated, openly displays the fruitfulness of her hidden virtue, and yields the joyful herb. The trees and shrubs put forth their sweetest flowers; and are adorned with verdant leaves, as it were with a new vesture. The birds of heaven, now that the mournful frost is swept away, are sweetly jubilant; and flying through the fields and groves rejoice in concert at the return of the cloudless sky and luxuriant crops. The sun and moon, and the stars of the firmament, shed their light more brilliantly. Truly, there is no creature to be seen, which does not, with its renovated life, joyfully salute Christ at His Rising. Since, therefore, there is so much of gladness in

¹ Coloss. iii. 1, 2.

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the elements, how great ought to be the exultation of Angels and men, who are set above the other creatures of the world ! Verily, this is the Day which the Lord hath made, even as He most evidently shews us by the Scriptures, by types, by Prophets, by Angels, by Apostles, and Doctors, testifying together and preaching His Resurrection. And where all things unite in harmony, and the highest as well as the lowest affirm the same, no longer ought any motive of doubt to remain in the heart ; for the Almighty God is able to do most abundantly above all that we can understand, and to bring forth new effects out of that which is not.

4. Christ, therefore, being now glorified in the flesh, and the whole world reanimated, do thou also, O mortal man, glorify God, and be renewed in the spirit of thy mind. Ever render thanks to thy Redeemer for His boundless gifts, distributed to thee and all the faithful. Lift on high the eyes of thine heart, look on the road along which JESUS has gone before, the saving Health of thy countenance ; follow Him with the steps of love, even to the entrance of Heaven. For thou hast before thee the Mirror of all sanctity, and the Light of celestial life ; walk securely after JESUS, the bountiful Dispenser of eternal blessedness, the Ruler of Heaven and earth. None is holier than He, none purer, none more illustrious, none richer, none mightier. *All power, saith He, is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth.*¹ Therefore let thy faith stand firmly in JESUS Christ, let thy hope flourish, thy charity dance for joy. Acquit yourselves like men, and be strong ; fight against the flesh, against the world, against the devil and his angels, fearing the assault of no adverse power. For the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath conquered, whose anger none can resist ; none shall be able to escape His hands ; for all things are put under His feet. Now Heaven rejoices, Earth claps her hands ; Satan mourns ; Death flies, and shall no longer have dominion over Christ. Under such a King, therefore, it is safe to war ; under such a Shepherd it is pleasant to stand, to be fed and disciplined, to be subjected and ruled, for He lacks nothing, and abounds in all good things.

5. Do thou, therefore, also imitate the King of kings, thy

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 18.

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Lord God, rising from death; that for the rest thou mayest walk in newness of a better life, trampling on vices, forgetting the evils that are past; not returning to thy wonted trifling, but raising thyself with greater fervour to celestial desires. For Christ, having vanquished death, returned not to hell; but having visited His intimate friends on the earth, ascended joyfully to Heaven, liberating and exalting the form of a servant above the Angelic powers; teaching to ascend, by the steps of humility and the service of a due subjection, to the glory of eternal happiness. If thou desire, therefore, to receive heavenly comfort, and to rejoice for ever with the Angelic spirits, flee carnal pleasure, which is the parent of death. Seek the spiritual refection of the soul, which Christ has prepared for all who approach the Table of His precious Body, more sweet than all corporal banquets. For unless the old man with his deeds be wholly put off, celestial sweetness cannot enter. And unless the flesh be subject to the Spirit, and all earthly care be postponed, the promised Paraclete will not come, nor shalt thou be inwardly refreshed by the eating of the Paschal Lamb. That our interior, therefore, may be full of spiritual joy, all malice and wickedness ought to be removed from the heart; that, like new-born babes, we may walk in newness of life, washed with tears, and clad in white robes. Let our behaviour accordingly be humble and matured; our eyes stable, and our affections pure; our voices ready; our ears intent upon the Divine words; and all our senses well fenced on every side. For the Holy Angels are present, the ministers of the Lord, considering the actions of each one of us; who rises most actively, who prays most devoutly, who sings with most alacrity, who seeks JESUS most fervently. Away, then, with the rumours of the world; avoid light fables; let our conversation be edifying, that it may administer grace to all hearers, and that he who utters it may for it deserve the blessing which comes of a good contribution. Let the acts of the Saviour be unfolded; let the good rumour of JESUS of Nazareth be spread abroad, to the joy and delight of all.

6. Let Christ crucified never depart from the mind; let Christ rising again meet thee every where. And though He be not yet seen with the eyes, yet He is secretly affected by frequent cries; and till He shall reveal Himself to thee in

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thy prayers, depart not from His Sepulchre. Let inquiry be made of the Holy Angels, who always enjoy His clear vision, that they may tell us where the Lord is; or pray for us, that He would vouchsafe to appear to us in our sadness, and comfort with His most sweet grace the hearts of all mourners. Would, Lord JESU, that Thou mightest vouchsafe to inflame my heart to seek Thee with Mary at break of day; and to strengthen me in faith, who by breathing on Thy Apostles didst give them the Holy Ghost. Open to me the meaning of the Scriptures; and, according to Thy promise, lead me into all truth; Who art above all God blessed for ever. Amen.

III.

Homily of Thomas à Kempis.*(3d for Easter.)*OF THE MYSTIC NAME PASSEOVER, AND THE CONVERSATION
OF A NEW LIFE.*CHRIST our Passover is sacrificed for us.¹*

THE sacred name Passover is in most frequent use and high esteem among the faithful; and the Mystery which it denotes ought to be most especially honoured among Christians. Let us, then, all weigh what hath been done and instituted for our salvation. For the word Passover signifies the Passage of the Lord; because Christ on this Day returned from death to life, migrated from death to life, migrated from the world to heaven, to teach us contempt of the earthly, and love of the heavenly. High praise, then, we owe to our Heavenly Father, who hath quickened us together in His Beloved Son, who suffered and was crucified in the flesh; by whose bruises we are healed, by whose innocent Passion we are delivered from death. And again, I say, let us magnify His Name, and rejoice in His most glorious Resurrection.

2. First came the grief of Christ's most bitter Death, which abolished the enmities of the old transgression, and washed

¹ 1 Cor. v. 7.

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away all the stains of our sin. Then hath followed the sweetness of unutterable joy and the height of perennial glory, which shall be given, after the exile of this world, to all those who are by Baptism regenerated in Christ, returning as it were from Egypt to the bliss of Paradise. For by the immolation of the True Lamb, the spiritual Israel hath been freed from the captivity of the condemnation of the devil, and the new people of God hath passed into the freedom of the celestial habitation. Forasmuch as Christ rising from the dead hath converted the ancient Passover into the new, and transferred temporal life to eternal. Well, therefore, says the Apostle, and Holy Mother Church, throughout all the world, repeats the joyful strain: *CHRIST our Passover is sacrificed for us.* Ever, then, ought we to be mindful of the dolorous Passion of Christ, no less than of His joyful Resurrection, for our consolation in this mortal state; that so, through patience under many tribulations for Christ's sake, we may have hope and confidence that we shall reign with Him for ever. Study, then, in this holy and happy time, to rise again to the desire of a new conversation, and with spiritual joy to celebrate the praises of God. For Christ is powerful to help us yet more, and yet more fervently to inflame us with the desire of a heavenly life.

3. It darkens the lustre of the Paschal solemnity, when any one pants more after carnal eating than the participation of Christ's precious Body, in which is contained the fountain of all sweetness, and the refection of the soul. For truly, without this most sacred Food, meagre and unsatisfying is the board of the rich, how splendidly soever prepared. For as the soul is better than every body, so Christ, who is the Food of the soul, excelleth every flavour in sweetness. And true though it be, that by reason of this solemnity of the Lord's Resurrection, more than ordinary joy befits, and pleasanter food is more freely permitted; yet ought the use of feasting to be moderate, and the bodily appetite to be restrained, in the fear of God. For this is profitable to the salvation of body and soul, and so a man becomes meet for the praises of God. Let not, then, the concupiscence of the flesh prevail over thee; but, by devotion of mind, vanquish, in the power of the Holy Ghost, whatever corporal delectation

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comes over thee by means of the senses. Happy that soul, which, by the odour of the unguents of Christ, is drawn to taste of the celestial banquet, and cries out with the Psalmist, saying: *At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore: when Thou shalt appear, I shall be satisfied.*¹ Greatly mistaken, surely, are all the foolish of heart, who, neglecting true and celestial good, seek consolations in earthly things, and without the bridle of just restraint covet great possessions. *The Kingdom of God, says the Apostle, is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.*²

4. Who, then, is he that celebrates the Passover in spirit? He who passes over from vices to virtues; who rises from his old life and evil custom to a state of new devotion. Who, that worthily honours the Passover? He who spurns secular honours, and seeks the glory of Christ in all his good actions. Who sacrifices the kid on the evening of the Passover? He who truly repents of his sins, and for the rest abstains from sin. Who eats the roasted Lamb with bitter herbs? He who sorrowfully thinks of Christ suffering on the Cross, and living innocently chastens himself. Who is the true Hebrew, who passes through the Red Sea? He who proceeds from carnal sense to sweetness of the Spirit, and, forgetting those things which are behind, reaches forward to those which are before. Who is the true child of Abraham? He who advances from servile fear to the liberty of the sons of God. Who is the true disciple of JESUS? He who perfectly renounces all earthly things, and relinquishes his own will. Who is worthy to sit at the Table of Christ? He who voluntarily humbles himself for the love of Christ. Who is fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? He who contemns the kingdom of the world and all secular parade; he is the friend of God, the citizen of Heaven, and lord of the world. Who is meet to contemplate the Face of Christ, and to penetrate the secret of Heaven? He who is clean in heart, fervent in prayer, and wholly given up to his internal life. Who is beloved and accepted of God? He who is abject in his own eyes, and disesteems every thing which passes away.

¹ Vid. Ps. xv. 11; xvi. 15.² Rom. xiv. 17.

IV.

Homily of S. Bernard.

(1st for Easter.)

OF THE SEVEN SEALS LOOSENED BY THE LAMB.

*The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed.*¹

WISDOM truly hath prevailed over malice, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things: on my behalf mightily, towards me sweetly. He hath prevailed over the blasphemies of the Jews on the Cross: He hath bound the strong man armed in his palace; He hath carried off a triumph over the very empire of death. For where now are thy reproaches, O Jew? Where, O Zabulon, are the vessels of thy captivity? Where, Death, is thy victory? The Accuser is confounded, the Spoiler is spoiled. Here is a new kind of power! Death, hitherto victorious, stands now astonished. What profit hast thou, O Jew, that but one day since thou waggedst before the Cross thy sacrilegious head? What, that thou didst pursue with reproaches Christ, the true Head of human kind? *Let Christ*, said he, *the King of Israel, come down from the Cross.*² O poisoned tongue! O word of malice! O wicked speech! This is not, Caiaphas, what thou saidst a short time ago: *It is expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not.*³ But that, since it was no lie, thou saidst not of thyself, thou spakest not of thy own mind. *If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross:*⁴ this is no doubt thine own; or his rather, who is a liar from the beginning. For why does this, that He should come down, seem to be a consequence of His being a king, and not rather that He should ascend? Ah! dost thou not remember, thou old serpent, with what confusion thou departedst once before, after that thou hadst presumed to say, *Cast Thyself down;* and, *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.*⁵ Is the word which thou hast heard, O Jew, 'The Lord hath reigned from the

¹ Rev. v. 5.² S. Mark xv. 32.³ S. John xi. 50.⁴ S. Matt. xxvii. 42.⁵ S. Matt. iv. 6, &c.

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Tree,' thus fallen out to thee, that thou shouldst deny thy King, because He remains on the Tree? But perchance thou hast not heard that this announcement was designed for the nations, not for the Jews. *Tell it out, it is said, among the heathen, that the Lord hath reigned from the Tree.*¹

2. Suitably, therefore, did the Gentile ruler inscribe upon the Tree the title of His Kingdom; nor could the Jew deface, as he wished, the superscription of the title, much less hinder the Lord's Passion and our redemption. *Let Him come down, they say, if He be the King of Israel.* Nay, but because He is the King of Israel, He may not drop the title of the Kingdom; He may not lay aside the sceptre of His Empire, the government of which is verily upon His shoulders, as prophesied.² *Write not, say the Jews to Pilate, write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am the King of the Jews;* and Pilate answered, *What I have written, I have written.*³ If Pilate has written what he has written, shall not Christ perfect what He hath begun? For He hath made a beginning, and He will save us. But they say, *He saved others; Himself He cannot save.*⁴ Nay, but if He come down, He will save none. For since none can be saved but he that endureth to the end, how much less without persevering to the end could He be the Saviour? He therefore saveth others: for He Himself standeth not in need of salvation, being Himself Salvation. He worketh out our salvation, and suffereth not the Evening Sacrifice of our saving Victim to fail of its full accomplishment. He knoweth the thought of thy heart, O wicked! He will not give thee occasion to rob us of our endurance, which alone receives the crown. He will not silence the tongues of preachers that preach comfort to the weak-hearted, and that say to each, Desert not thou thy post: which would infallibly be the result, if they could make answer, Why, Christ deserted His. For the words and thoughts of men are prone to evil. O

¹ Impleta sunt quæ concinit
David, fideli carmine,
Dicendo nationibus,
Regnavit a ligno Deus.

Hymnus infra Hebd. Passionis.

² Isaiah ix. 6.

³ S. John xix. 19-22.

⁴ S. Matt. xxvii. 42.

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malicious! thou hast prepared thine arrows in the quiver without a cause; adding the taunts of the Jews to the disciples' sighs. These despair, whilst those utter reproaches: but neither the one weapon nor the other will do injury to Christ. He chose another time to comfort His disciples, and to confound His adversaries.

3. Meantime He rather exhibits patience, commends humility, fulfils obedience, perfects charity. Verily, with these jewels of virtue are the four corners of His Cross adorned: high above the rest is charity, on the right hand obedience, patience on the left, humility, the root of virtues, lowest of all. With these is the Trophy of the Cross enriched by the consummation of the Lord's Passion; wherein, humble under the Jews' blasphemies, patient under His wounds, He was pierced within by their tongues, and by the nails without. For charity is herein also perfected, in that He laid down His life for His friends; and obedience was consummated when He bowed His Head and yielded up His soul, and became obedient even unto death. These are the riches, this the glory, of which they endeavoured to despoil the Church of Christ, who said: *If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross.* In order, verily, that there might be no model of obedience, no incentive to love, no example of patience or humility; but that these most sweet words might have to be blotted from the Gospel, those words sweeter than honey and the honeycomb: *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*¹ And these addressed to His Father: *I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.*² These, again, to the disciples: *Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly of heart.*³ And, *I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.*⁴ For this is what is grievous to the craft of the poisonous Serpent, that the brazen Serpent should be uplifted in the desert, by gazing at which the wounds might be healed which he inflicted. Else, at whose instigation but his can we believe Pilate's wife to have sent to him, saying: *Have thou nothing to do with that Just Man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream concerning Him?*⁵ So the Enemy began even then to fear; but

¹ S. John xv. 13.² Ib. xvii. 4.³ S. Matt. xi. 29.⁴ S. John xii. 32.⁵ S. Matt. xxvii. 19.

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now, feeling himself very greatly weakened by the virtue of the Cross, he is seized with a late repentance; and those whom he had instigated to crucify Him, he now instigates to persuade Him to come down from the Cross. At length they say: *If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe on Him.*¹ This, plainly, is the Serpent's craft, this the invention of spiritual wickedness. He had heard, that Wicked one, the Saviour's voice, saying: *I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*² and he knew how great zeal He had shewn for the salvation of that people. Wherefore, in the depth of his malice, he instructed the tongues of the blasphemers, and suggested the words: *Let Him come down, and we will believe;* as if there were now no hinderance to His coming down, considering the greatness of His desire for their believing.

4. But what are his plots, and for whom lays he his snares, this wily one? For Him, in sooth, against whom the Enemy shall be able to do no violence, nor the son of wickedness approach to hurt Him. He is not moved by vain promises, who knoweth the hearts of all: even as He was not moved by the blasphemous taunt, being meekest of all. Since the malicious persuasion tended, not to their believing, but to the total destruction of whatever faith we had in Him. For when we read, *The works of God are perfect,*³ how could we confess Him to be God, who had left the work of our salvation imperfect? But let us hear what answer Christ makes to these things, by the Prophet. Thou seekest a sign, O Jew? *Expect Me in the day of My Resurrection.*⁴ If thou art willing to believe, I have shewn thee yet greater works. I have multiplied signs; I have wrought cures yesterday and the day before; to-day I have rather to be perfected. Was is not a greater wonder that the Evil spirits should go out of bodies possessed, and the paralytic leap from their beds, than that the nails which thou hast fixed in My Hands and Feet should start forth from them? But it is now My time of suffering, not of working: and as thou strovest in vain to anticipate, so neither wilt thou be able to impede, the hour of My Passion.

¹ S. Matt. xxvii. 42.² Ib. xv. 24.³ Vid. Deut. xxxii. 4.⁴ Zeph. iii. 8. Vulg.

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5. But if this evil and adulterous generation still seek after a sign, there shall no sign be given it but the sign of the Prophet Jonas; sign not of coming down, but of rising again; sign which, though the Jew seek not after it, the Christian may embrace and rejoice in. For the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed. The lion's Whelp is raised at His Father's Voice; He comes forth of the closed Sepulchre, who came not down from the Cross. And whether this is not greater, be our enemies judges, who so carefully guarded the tomb, sealing the stone, and setting a watch. For this stone so very great, concerning which those devout women made lamentations together, upon the Lord's Rising, *the Angel rolled away, and sat*, as it is written, *upon it*. It is evident, then, that from the closed tomb came forth that revived Body, which at Its Birth came forth into life from the womb of a Virgin, and through closed doors entered into the assembly of the disciples. But there is a place whence He would not come forth through closed doors; the prison, verily, of hell. For He broke in pieces the iron gates, He ground to powder all its bolts; that He might bring forth His people to freedom, whom He had redeemed out of the hand of the Enemy; that the tribes of the white-robed might be led forth through open portals, even they that had washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb; yea, white in Blood, because with It and in It there came out Water also for their whitening; and he that saw it beareth witness of it. Or, verily, they are white in blood, but in the milky Blood of the Young Lamb, white and ruddy, as you have it in the Song of Songs, where the Spouse saith: *My Beloved is white and ruddy, chief among a thousand*.¹ Hence, also, the witness of the Resurrection appears in a white vesture and with a countenance of lightning.

6. Now if this alone would seem to be sufficient to confute the calumnies of the Jews, that He came forth from the closed tomb, against whom they cried insultingly, *If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the Cross*: (for they had taken more solicitous care to close and seal the Sepulchre than to infix the nails); if therefore, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed in this very breaking forth, and exhibited a

¹ Cant. v. 10.

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greater work than they looked for: to what shall we be able to compare the miracle of the Resurrection itself? We read, indeed, that it was preceded by the resurrection, or rather the raising up, of some; but these were forerunners of Him, over whom He is acknowledged to shine pre-eminent by a double prerogative. For the others rose indeed, but they were to die again: whereas, *Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.*¹ Those died again, and had need of another resurrection; Christ, in that He died, died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God, He liveth in eternity.² Deservedly, therefore, is Christ the first fruits of those that rise: for He so rose as to have no farther fall; for He alone attained immortality.

7. There is another point wherein the glory of this Resurrection must shine forth pre-eminent. For which of all the rest ever raised himself? This is a thing ineffable, that one who slept should raise himself from death: this stands alone; there is none that can do it, no, not one. Eliseus the prophet raised the dead; but another, not himself. For, lo! these many years he hath lain in the tomb, waiting to be raised by another, which he cannot do for himself; to be raised, in sooth, by Him, who, in His own person, hath triumphed over the empire of death. Hence we say of others, that they are raised; of Christ, that He rose, for He alone came forth victorious from the Sepulchre by His own power; for in this also the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed. How great, then, His power! yea, what can appear impossible to Him that liveth, and saith to His Father, *I am risen, and here I am with Thee;*³ who, though so powerful, was reckoned among the dead, but free among the dead?

8. And He deferred not His Resurrection beyond the third day, that the Prophet might be found faithful, which said, *After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up.*⁴ It is fit, indeed, that the members should follow in like fashion as the Head went before. On the Friday He redeemed man on the Cross, the very same day on which He had made man at the beginning: the following day He rested⁵

¹ Rom. vi. 9.² Ib. vi. 10.³ Vid. supra, p. 207.⁴ Hos. vi. 2.⁵ sabbatizavit.

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in the Sepulchre, having finished the work which He had undertaken: and on the third day, the First of Days, He came forth victorious over death, a New Man, the First Fruits of them that slept. So we also, whosoever we be that follow our Head, during the whole of this day in which we are created and redeemed, ought not to cease from penance, ought not to cease from bearing our Cross, persevering therein, as He persevered, until the Spirit bid us rest from our labours. My brethren, let us give ear to no one, neither to flesh and blood, nor any spirit that persuades us to come down from the Cross. Let us stand fast on our Cross, let us die on our Cross: let us be buried by the hands of others, not by our own carelessness. Our Head was buried in the Tomb by just men; may Holy Angels lay us in the tomb when they judge meet; that, having manfully consummated the day of the Cross, during the second, which is after death, we may rest sweetly, sleeping happily in our tomb, looking for that blessed hope, even the glorious Appearance of the great God, who shall at length raise our bodies on the Third Day, fashioned like unto His glorious Body. They stink that have been dead four days, as it is written of Lazarus: *Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.*¹

9. The invention of the children of Adam has added the fourth day, which was not received from the Lord. Wherefore they are corrupt, and are become abominable like beasts of burden, which putrefy in their own filth. For the three days, of which I have spoken, are of divine appointment, for labour, for rest, for resurrection. These please not the children of men, but they desire to prefer their own day: delaying penance, that they may indulge their lusts. This is not the Day which the Lord hath made; they are become four days dead, and already begin to stink. Of this day knew not that Holy Thing which was born of Mary: He rose the Third day, that He might see no corruption. *The Lion, therefore, of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed.* The Lamb is slain, but the Lion hath prevailed. The Lion will roar; who will not fear? The Lion, I say, the strongest of beasts, which will feel no fear at any attack, the Lion, namely, of the tribe of Judah.

¹ S. John xi. 39.

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Let them fear that denied Him; that said, *We have no king but Cæsar.*¹ Let them fear that said, *We will not have this man to reign over us.*² Seeing that He hath returned, having received the Kingdom, and will miserably destroy the wicked. Would you certainly know, that He hath returned and hath received the Kingdom? *All power, saith He, is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.*³ Again, the Father saith in the Psalm: *Desire of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*⁴ For, although the Lion is strong, and not cruel, yet His indignation is grievous, and the wrath of the Dove intolerable. But the Lion will roar in behalf of His people, and not against them. Let strangers fear; but let the tribe of Judah rather rejoice.

10. Let them rejoice, who are clothed with confession, all whose bones cry out: Lord, who is like unto Thee? *This is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.*⁵ For David is said to be comely in appearance, and of strong hand; and he saith himself, *All my desire is before Thee;*⁶ and, *I will keep strength before Thee.* He is called the *Root of David.* Not David His root, but He the Root of David; for He beareth him, and is not borne. Well callest thou thy Son thy Lord, holy David; for thou bearest not the Root, but the Root thee. He is the Root of thy strength and thy desire, a Root desirable, a strong Root. *The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the Book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*⁷ These are the words of the Apocalypse. Let those learn them who have not read them; let those who know them call them to mind. *I saw, saith John, in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a Book sealed with seven seals: and no man was able to open the Book, neither to look thereon: and I, saith he, wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the Book. And one of the Elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed. And I beheld, and, lo, in the*

¹ S. John xix. 15.² S. Luke xix. 14.³ S. Matt. xxviii. 18.⁴ Ps. ii. 8.⁵ Rev. v. 5.⁶ Ps. xxxviii. 9.⁷ Rev. ut supra.

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*midst of the throne stood a Lamb as it had been slain: and He came and took the Book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne: and there was made great joy and giving of thanks.*¹ John heard speak of a Lion, and he saw a Lamb. A Lamb was slain, a Lamb took the Book, a Lamb opened it, and appeared as a Lion. Lastly, the Elders say, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power.*² Not to lose His meekness, but to receive power, that He may both remain a Lamb and be yet a Lion. I say more, He too, as it appears to me, is that Book which could not be opened. For who was found worthy to open that Book? Even John Baptist himself professes himself unworthy, than whom none hath arisen greater among those that are born of woman. *I am not worthy, saith he, to loose the latchet of His shoe.* For He had come among us, Majesty clad in sandals, Incarnate Deity; He had come, the Wisdom of God, but in a book closed, yea and sealed. That which was bound in by the shoe's latchet was enclosed by the seals of the book.

11. But what shall I say upon these Seven Seals? Are the three faculties of the soul—the reason, the memory, and the will—and the quadruple composition of the body, as if out of the four elements, to be, perhaps, understood by these seven, that we may be sure of there being nothing lacking of the truth of our Saviour's Humanity? Or, is the Book itself rather His Humanity, and the Seven Seals to be discovered? For I think seven particulars could be found, wherein chiefly the presence of His Majesty was concealed in the Flesh; so that the Book could not be opened, and the Wisdom known which lay concealed. Now, these are the circumstances which

we meet with: The Espousals of His Mother, by which
 First Seal. her virginal child-bearing and the purity of His conception was concealed; so that the Framer of mankind was

esteemed the son of a carpenter. Again, the infirmity
 Second Seal. of His Body, under which, amidst His cries and wailings, His sleeping and sucking at the breast, and His subjection to the other necessities of the flesh, the Power of His

Deity lay hid. Thus, too, His receiving the sign of
 Third Seal. Circumcision, the remedy of sin, the medicine of sick-

¹ Vid. Rev. v. 1, &c.² Ib. v. 12.

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ness, He that had come to take away all sickness and sin. Also His flight into Egypt from the face of King Herod, Fourth Seal. both prevented the possibility of His being recognised either as the Son of God or the King of Heaven. And what was implied by that triple temptation of the Enemy in the wilderness, on the pinnacle of the temple, Fifth Seal. and upon the mountain? *If Thou be the Son of God*, saith he, *command that these stones be made bread*; again, *Cast Thyself down*.¹ Christ did neither, that the Book might remain sealed, that the Crafty one might be deceived. And at length, he was so far misled, as to take it for a perfect certainty that He was a mere man; and his blind pride broke out into so great madness, that he no longer said, *If Thou be the Son of God*; but, *All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me*. The sixth Seal is the Cross, when He hung between thieves, and the Lord of Majesty Sixth Seal. was reckoned with the unjust. Finally, His Sepulture closed the Book; and no other seal kept so entirely Seventh Seal. close, so hid this great Sacrament of Mercy. For upon the Lord's burial, there certainly appeared nought remaining but despair; so that the very disciples said, *We trusted*. Ah, who would not have wept at that time that the Book was so straitly closed, and none to open it?

12. But weep no more, holy John; and thou, Mary, weep not. Be grief far off; dispersed the cloud of sadness. Be glad, O ye righteous, and rejoice in the Lord; and be joyful all ye that are true of heart. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, the Lion that rose; worthy, lastly, the Book Itself to open Itself. For He is risen from the dead, He is risen by His own power, and after three days, as He foretold; His enemies themselves bearing witness; risen, too, with so great majesty and glory, as to shew plainly that all the seals or veils of which I have spoken above were self-chosen, not necessary; not part of His condition, but of His own option. To what purpose, O Jew, sealed you but lately the stone of the Sepulchre? *Because that Deceiver said, whilst He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again*.² He is indeed a Deceiver, but in pity, not in malice. Finally, O Lord, Thou

¹ S. Matt. iv. 3, 6.² S. Matt. xxvii. 63.

hast deceived me, and I was deceived (says your Prophet in your person). *Thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed.*¹ He *deceived* you, O Jew, in His Passion; for in His Resurrection He waxed valiant, and prevailed, the victorious Lion of the tribe of Judah. *For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*² What, then, wilt thou do? He hath foretold it, and now He liveth again. Search diligently the Seal of His Sepulchre; for it is broken. The sign is given thee of the Prophet Jonas, as He before told you. Jonas is come forth from the whale's belly; Christ hath come forth the Third Day from the heart of the earth: except that manifestly a greater than Jonas is here, who hath raised Himself by His own power from even the very womb of death. The men of Nineveh, therefore, shall rise up in judgment against you; therefore shall they be your judges, for they obeyed the Prophet; but you not even the Lord of Prophets.

13. Where now is that word of yours, *Let Him come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him?* You were inclined to break through the Seal of the Cross, promising to enter unto faith. Lo, it is open; it hath not been broken; enter. Else, if ye believe not on Him risen, ye would certainly not have believed on Him if He had come down. If the Cross of Christ so offended you, *For the Word of the Cross is unto the Jews a stumbling-block,*³ saith the Apostle; at least let the newness of the Resurrection rouse you. We find glory in the Cross. To us that are saved, it is the Power of God, and, as we proclaim, the fulness of all virtues. Do you have part, at least, in the Resurrection. But, perhaps, even that, yea, that much more offends you, and the savour to us of life unto life is to you the savour of death unto death. What, then, stand we upon? The elder brother endures not the hearing of the music and dancing; he ill brooks the slaying for us of the fatted calf. He stands without; he altogether refuses to enter. Let us go in, my brethren, and feast us on the unleavened Bread of sincerity and truth; for Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Let us embrace the virtues commended to us in the Cross, humility, patience, obedience, and charity.

¹ Jer. xx. 7.² 1 Cor. ii. 8.³ 1 Cor. i. 23.

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14. Let us, then, weigh with careful thought what is principally commended to us in this high Festival: His Resurrection, namely, His Passage and Transmigration. For Christ, my brethren, falls not to-day back again into the tomb; but He is risen. He returns not, but hath passed on; He hath crossed over, He wanders not back. Lastly, the very Passover which we celebrate is, by interpretation, a Passage over, without return; and Galilee, where He that is risen promises that we shall see Him, imports not wandering back, but passing over. And now, I think, the minds of some have flown on, and begin to see the tendency of what I am saying. I have spoken, however, with brevity; the more so, lest the length of my sermon should seem to burden your devotion on so great a Festival. If, after the 'Finishing' of the Cross, our Lord Christ had returned to life, to this mortal state of ours, and the sorrows of this present time, I could not speak, my brethren, of His passing on, but of His returning; not of His crossing over to some higher state, but of His return to His former condition. But now, seeing that He hath passed on to newness of life, He invites us also to pass on; He calls us to Galilee. Wherefore, in that He died, He died unto sin once; in that He liveth, He liveth not to the flesh, but unto God.

15. But what shall we say, who rob our Lord's sacred Resurrection of the Name of the Passover, making it for ourselves rather a return, than a passing over? We have mourned these days, given up to compunction and prayer, to heaviness of spirit and abstinence, desiring to redeem and wash out, this Holy Lent, the negligences of other times. We have communicated in the Sufferings of Christ; we have been planted afresh with Him through a baptism, as it were, of tears, penance, and confession. If, then, we have died unto sin, how shall we live any longer therein? If we have deplored our negligences, why should we now fall back again into the same? Shall we now be found again distracted as before; full of words as before; slothful and negligent as before; vain, suspicious, given to detraction, wrathful, and involved in other vices, which we have with such solicitude wept over in these days? I have washed my feet, how shall I again defile them? I have put off

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my coat, how shall I put it on?¹ This is not a passing over, my brethren; this is not the way to see Christ; this not the path wherein God will shew us His Salvation. Lastly, He that looketh back is not fit for the Kingdom of God.

16. Thus the lovers of the world, enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose Name they have received in vain, being called Christians, pant through the whole of the season for the coming days of the Resurrection; alas! that they may indulge more freely in their lusts. There clouds, my brethren, the joy of the Solemnity a yet sadder subject; but we mourn the desecration of the Solemnity in itself, which we cannot conceal even this very day, yea, less on this day than any. Alas! shame! the Resurrection of our Saviour is made a time for sinning, a boundary to the period of discipline! For, from thenceforth, there is a return to feastings and drunkenness; chambering and wantonness recommence, and the reins are given to concupiscence: as if Christ rose for this, and not rather for our justification. So honour ye Christ, O wretched men, Christ whom ye have received? Ye have prepared a lodging for Him that was coming, confessing your sins with groaning, chastising your bodies, giving alms; and lo! when you receive Him, you betray Him to His enemies, yea, you compel Him to go out, by admitting your former wickednesses. For fellowship can there be none of light with darkness, of Christ with pride, with avarice, with ambition, with hatred of brethren, with wantonness, with fornication. For why is less due to Him now that He is present than when He was to come? Why does the Season of His Resurrection require less reverence than that of His Passion? But ye, it is plain, honour neither the one nor the other. For if ye had suffered with Him, ye should reign with Him: if ye had died with Him, ye should also rise with Him.

17. But now solely from the custom of the season, and from a certain pretence, has arisen that humiliation, which is not followed by exultation of spirit. *For this cause*, as the Apostle saith, *many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*² For this cause a great mortality prevails in many places, especially during these days. For why? ye are taken, ye sinners, in the midst of your straits; ye that have not only trans-

¹ Cant. v. 3.² 1 Cor. xi. 30.

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gressed, but persisted in transgression, adding sin to sin, either wholly impenitent, or but cold in your repentance; not avoiding what is dangerous, or what you have found, by wretched experience, to be incentives to sin. The enemy hath entangled you (as Scripture says) in the very complication of the sinews. If with such conscience ye fly back from Christ's Sacraments, ye have no fellowship with Christ, ye have no life in you. Hear His words: Unless ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.¹ If ye receive Him unworthily, ye eat judgment to yourselves, not discerning the Holy Body of the Lord. Return, therefore, ye sinners, to a true heart; seek the Lord with your whole heart, and hate evil; repenting not in word only and in tongue, but in spirit and in truth. For it is evidently not enough for a man to grieve for having fallen, if he still incline to abide in the slippery path; or for having wandered, if he seek not a guide. Let there be proof of true compunction, a flying from the opportunities, an avoidance of the occasions, of sin. Else, great fear is there, lest this Day (seeing that it also is set for the fall and rising again of many) condemn you, either as open aliens from Christ, in that ye have no fellowship with Christ, or as companions with Judas, into whom Satan entered after the sop.²

18. But what have we to do, my brethren, with judging those that are without? except that we weep for having been ourselves in the like net, and rejoice at our deliverance, by the sole work of mercy, from that in which we grieve with fraternal charity to see them miserably held captive. But oh! that even we ourselves may be now found sanctified, and wholly exempt from these wretched and sacrilegious habits, that no part of our spiritual exercise perish, or be diminished at the coming of the holy Resurrection, but that we be rather careful to pass over and increase abundantly. For whosoever he be that, after the tears of penance, returns not to carnal consolation, but abounds in confidence in the Divine mercy, he enters, as it were, upon a new stage of devotion, and joy in the Holy Ghost: nor is he so much affected with compunction at the remembrance of past sins, as delighted at the calling to

¹ S. John vi. 54.² Ib. xiii. 27.

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mind, and inflamed with the desire, of eternal rewards: this is, certainly, he that rises with Christ, that keeps the Passover, that hastens to Galilee. Ye, therefore, my most dearly beloved, if ye be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God; have a relish for those things that are above, not for those on the earth:¹ that, like as Christ is raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so ye also should walk in newness of life;² that ye may rejoice to pass over from secular delights and consolations of the world, through compunction and the sorrow which is according to God, to holy devotion and spiritual joy, with His aid, who hath passed over out of this world to His Father, and vouchsafes also to draw us after Him, and to call us to Galilee, that He may shew Himself to us, who is over all God blessed for ever. Amen.

¹ Coloss. iii. 1, 2.² Rom. vi. 4.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. XIII.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. LEO THE GREAT AND THOMAS À KEMPIS ;

FOR THE ASCENSION.

I.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

(1st for the Ascension.)

SYNOPSIS.

- I. Both the abode of Christ on the earth after His Resurrection and the doubts of the disciples were ordered so as to confirm our faith.
- II. What great things were done by Christ during these days.
- III. The trembling hearts of the disciples were comforted by touching His wounds.
- IV. Christ's Ascension filled with joy those who had been terrified by His death, and left in doubt by His Resurrection.—That Christ conferred on us greater blessings than those of which Satan had deprived us.

THE fortieth day, my most dearly beloved, from the blessed and glorious Resurrection of our Lord JESUS Christ, who therein, by the Divine power, raised again after three days that true Temple of God which the impious Jews had destroyed,—the fortieth, I say, of these holy days, ordered by a most sacred dispensation, and employed for the purpose of our benefit and instruction, has now arrived. The Divine purpose was, that by our Lord's thus protracting the term of His corporeal Presence upon earth, the proofs necessary for

For the Ascension.

Why the disciples were permitted to doubt of the Lord's Resurrection.

establishing our faith in His Resurrection might be supplied. For the death of Christ had greatly troubled the hearts of the disciples; and over their minds, weighed down by sorrow for His sufferings on the Cross, for His giving up the ghost, and the burial of His lifeless Body, a certain languor and distrust had crept.

For, as we learn from the Gospel history, when the holy women announced the stone to be rolled away from the Sepulchre, the Tomb no longer to contain the Body, and the Angels to have given assurance that our Lord was alive, their words seemed to the Apostles and other disciples *as idle tales*.¹ The Spirit of Truth would assuredly never have allowed this weak state of fluctuating uncertainty to reign in the breasts of His heralds, had not these their anxious fears and curious search been meant to lay the foundation of our faith. By means of the Apostles, provision was made for our solicitude and our dangers, and in them we have been armed against the calumnies of wicked men, and the arguments of earthly wisdom. Their seeing has informed us, their hearing instructed us, their touching confirmed us. Let us return thanks for the Divine Providence, and for this needful slowness of belief in the holy Fathers. They doubted, that we might have no doubt.

Christ's proceedings between His Ascension and Resurrection.

2. It was not, then, in any useless course, my most dearly beloved, that the days between our Lord's Resurrection and Ascension passed away, but in them great sacraments were perfected, great mysteries revealed. In them the fear of death was removed, and the immortality, not only of the soul, but of the flesh, also set forth. In them the Lord breathed on the Apostles, and they all were filled with the Holy Spirit; and to the blessed Apostle Peter,² after he had received the keys of the kingdom, was pre-eminently committed the care of the Lord's fold. On these days, too, the Lord joined Himself to the two disciples as they journeyed; and, in order to remove all our doubts and darkness, rebuked their trembling fears and slowness of heart. Thus enlightened, they conceive the flame

¹ S. Luke xxiv. 11.² Ib. xxiv. 13.

For the Ascension.

of faith; and their hearts, before tepid, begin, as the Lord opens the Scriptures, to burn within them. In the breaking of bread also, their vision, as they sat at meat, is illuminated, and thereby the eyes of these men, to whom the glorified condition of their own nature was revealed, became opened with a much happier result than befel those great ones of the earth who by their own deceit are covered with confusion.

3. But while these and other miracles took place, and trembling thoughts were agitating the breasts of the disciples, the Lord appeared in the midst of them, and said, *Peace be unto you.*¹ And, in order to dismiss from their minds what they were revolving within their breasts (for they supposed they had seen a spirit, not a body), He reproves their thoughts so alien from the truth, He places before their doubting eyes those prints of the Cross which remained in His Hands and Feet, and He invites them to handle Him more closely. It was to heal the wounds of faithless hearts that the prints of the spear and of the nails were preserved, that with no doubtful faith, but with unwavering knowledge, they might believe that the same Nature which had lain in the sepulchre would sit on the throne of God the Father.

Why Christ
suffered the
scars of His
wounds to re-
main.

4. Now throughout the whole time, my most dearly beloved, which elapsed between the Lord's Resurrection and His death, this was the object, this the lesson, which God's Providence impressed upon the eyes and hearts of His people—that as the Lord JESUS was truly born, and suffered, and died, so also He might be known to have truly risen. The blessed Apostles, and all the disciples, who had trembled for the issue of the Cross, and been doubtful of belief in the Resurrection, were now so strengthened by the clearness of the truth, that when the Lord went up into the highest Heaven, they not only felt no sadness, but were even filled with great joy.² And truly it was a great and unspeakable cause of rejoicing, that in the sight of the holy Assembly our human nature should be exalted above the state of all celestial intelligences, passing upwards through the ranks of Angels, and raised

¹ S. Luke xxiv. 36; S. John xx. 26.

² S. Luke xxiv. 50.

For the Ascension.

higher even than Archangels. Nor was it to find any other limit to the sublimity of its exaltation than that of being received into the company of the Eternal Father, and associated with Him in glory on His throne, as it had been united with Him by nature in His Son. Wherefore, since the Ascension of Christ is our advancement, and whither the glory of the Head is gone before, thither the hope of the body is called likewise; let us be transported, my most dearly beloved, with becoming joy, and let us indulge in devout thanksgivings. For to-day have we not only been confirmed in the possession of Paradise, but in the person of Christ we have entered even the highest heavens; through the ineffable love of Christ we have obtained better things than by the malice of the Devil we had lost. For our bitter enemy cast us down from the bliss of our primal habitation, but the Son of God has united us with Himself, and placed us at the Right Hand of the Father, with whom He liveth and reigneth, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

We have received more from Christ than we lost by Satan.

II.

Homily of Thomas a Kempis.*(For Ascension Day.)*

OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS INTO HEAVEN.

*I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God: Alleluia.*¹

THE most kind JESUS, the Comforter of mourners, after He had risen from the dead, commanded the joys of the new salvation to be told in these words, through His most faithful lover Mary Magdalene, to His disciples, who were filled with exceeding sorrow at His death, *Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father.* O truly sweet and heavenly saying, full of joy and love!

¹ Vid. S. John xx. 17.

For the Ascension.

What is so pleasant for the faithful to hear, as the Ascension of the Lord into Heaven? as the passage of JESUS to His Father, to intercede for us, that we may come to Him with security, whom we offend in many things? For since our sins separate between us and our God, how shall we be able to be reconciled, except through the Mediator JESUS Christ? Through whom we have access to the Father, who paid for us the debt of our sins, and prepared a place that we might remain with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. *I ascend*, saith He, *to My Father, and your Father.*

2. O wondrous condescension of God to poor wretched men, to His fugitive disciples, His scattered and disconsolate sheep! He brings not forward the Name of His power; He does not terrify them with the word of threatening; He does not charge them with the crime of treason, nor upbraid them as guilty of the wickedness of unbelief; but, mindful of His own attribute of pity, He displays mercy and delays vengeance; and, after their grievous failure and cowardly flight, He expresses the sweetness of his fraternal love, and opens wide His unfailing charity towards all, in those words: Say unto My brethren. O honey-dropping sweetness of the most gracious JESUS, in all His conversation! Who, though He is powerful, and grievously offended by His friends and subjects, sent not his executioners to drag the guilty to prison, nor deposed any from the office to which He had raised him; but, like a good shepherd who loves his own sheep, condoles with their infirmity, and consults for their safety. At one time He reveals Himself by Angels; at another time by Mary, specially in His own Name, He commands the glory of His Resurrection to be told to His sorrowing brethren; saying, *Go unto My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father.* The sweet Master speaks sweet words, and calls them brethren who had first offended him, that He might the more largely commend His love wherewith He loved them even to the end: For first, indeed, He converted them from the vanity of the world to His faith; He wrought great miracles amongst them; He shewed them boundless benefits; He taught them the way of truth; and chose them before all other Saints to the honour of the Apostolic degree. And these same, after the whirlwind

of temptation, and the infirmity of falling, He recalls to repentance, and raises them to a more fervent state of holiness, and gladdens them by vouchsafing the vision of Himself; and shews them evident signs, and the marks of His Passion, to confirm their wavering faith, that they may rise again with greater strength, affording them a way by which they must ascend to never-fading glory. *I ascend*, saith He, *unto My Father*. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice truly in this saying; because it shall be for your good that I ascend to My Father, who sent Me; that I may prepare a place for you in the Kingdom of My Father, where ye shall rejoice, with all My Elect, for ever. ‘Be not troubled, therefore, nor be over-much sorrowful at My departure. I will pray the Father for you, that your sins may be forgiven you. I will strengthen you in adversities. I will comfort you in this world’s banishment. I will crown you in My heavenly Kingdom, where your joy shall be full, and secure from every enemy. For it has pleased My Father to give the Kingdom of God to you—the poor and humble; who, despising the allurements of the world, have followed My footsteps.’

3. From this time forth, Christ being taken up in the glory of the Father, the hearts of the Apostles were raised to heavenly things, and rejoiced the more to mount up on high; hoping that, laying aside the burden of the flesh, they should follow Him to glory. For great was their confidence that they should arrive at the Kingdom which is above, forasmuch as, having trampled under foot all worthless things, they led the life of the poor for Christ’s sake. They had, moreover, the promise of the Holy Spirit, that Gift in the strength of which they feared to suffer neither chains, nor prisons, nor the horrible tortures of death. O happy and glorious Ascension, by which human nature was exalted above all the Angels; and the ruin of the lost angels is repaired by the number of the Elect among men, who are signed with the Blood of Christ.

4. Attend now, therefore, thyself also, O faithful soul, who readest these things, that thou mayest follow Christ with the steps of love. For the bodily Ascension of Christ into Heaven is the spiritual elevation of the soul to God. No longer, therefore, let the habitation of the present life delight

For the Ascension.

thee; but rather let the heavenly abode in company with the holy Angels invite thee; where the souls of the Saints rest from all their labours and distresses, in contemplation of the Face of Christ for ever and ever. Ruminare frequently upon that sweet saying of Christ to His disciples before His Passion: *I go to prepare a place for you.*¹ And remember, that here thou hast no continuing city.² Sigh from thine inmost heart, on account of the many hinderances which draw thee back from heavenly things, and seek to be freed from present ills, and to arrive more quickly at Christ. For this is much better than to strive here daily against vices, and to be ever in fear from various dangers. Cry with the Spouse in the Canticles, and say: *Draw me after Thee,*³ where are all good things, and joy without end. But, alas! not yet is that pleasant hour arrived; as yet is the time, not of reigning, but of suffering. Therefore it befits thee to await the time of recompense fore-ordained of God; and to pray without ceasing until the Kingdom of God come, concerning which JESUS frequently spoke with His disciples, before He ascended into Heaven; that so, by hearing of the promises of everlasting glory, the battles of the present life might be rendered easy of endurance. And so much the more glowing should be the fervour of the mind for heavenly things, in proportion as it is severely afflicted in this life; for this is an evident token in the Elect, that they shall attain to everlasting salvation, if they bear with patience tribulations and labours for the Name of Christ. *For it behoved Christ to suffer, and thus to enter into His glory.*⁴

5. And, therefore, through patience and labour we must go to rest; for the Father receives none into Heaven, unless, through His Passion and Cross, he have followed His Well-beloved Son, whom He delivered for our sins to be crucified. Lift up, therefore, thine heart on high; look towards Heaven; consider whither thy Beloved has gone. Spread forth thy hands after Him; pray with bended knees and with frequent plaints, that He would send thee the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, into thy dry and cold heart, to inflame thee, and to direct thee to the cheerful performance of every good work. Amen.

¹ S. John xiv. 2.² Vid. Heb. xiii. 14.³ Vid. Cant i. 4.⁴ Vid. S. Luke xxiv. 26.

III.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

(2d for the Ascension.)

SYNOPSIS.

- I. That by the Ascension our joy is fulfilled, and our faith and hope endued with more signal power.
- II. That the Coming of Christ will not be before the number of the Elect is perfect.
- III. That faith has received such strength from the Ascension, as to triumph over all tortures, even in tender virgins.
- IV. That Christ was manifested in a more excellent manner by His Ascension, and was more immediately present in His Divinity. The meaning of the angelic communication.
- V. The Ascension of Christ excites us to despise earthly things, as pilgrims, and to be rich in charity, without which there is no coming to Christ.

THE Sacrament of our salvation, my most dearly beloved, which the Framer of the universe valued at the price of His own Blood, was in course of fulfilment throughout the whole period of His humiliation, from the day of His Birth in the flesh until the end of His Passion. And although many signs of His Divinity beamed forth even under the form of a servant, yet His acts during that period appertained peculiarly to the establishment of the reality of the Manhood which He had assumed. But after His Passion, when He had broken the bonds of death (who lost her power by attacking Him who knew no sin), weakness was changed into power, mortality into immortality, shame into glory; which the Lord JESUS Christ displayed before the sight of many men by *many infallible proofs*,¹ until the time came when He should carry up into Heaven the triumph of that victory which He had borne with Him from the dead. As, then, in the Easter solemnity the Lord's Resurrection was the cause of our rejoicing, so His Ascension into Heaven is the subject of our present joy, while we remember and duly honour that Day in which our humble nature was advanced in Christ above all the Host of Heaven, above

The Ascension
of Christ is a
subject of joy.

¹ Acts i. 3.

For the Ascension.

all the orders of Angels, and above the height of all Powers, even to the seat at the Right Hand of God the Father. By this disposition of the Divine operations we are stablished and built up. And the grace of God is become more wonderful, in that, although those objects were withdrawn from men's sight, which were felt to challenge veneration for themselves, still faith did not fail, hope did not waver, charity did not grow cold. This is the strength of lofty minds, this is the light of truly faithful souls, that they believe without delay things which are seen by no bodily gaze, and there fix their affection whither the eye cannot reach. But from whence would this religious feeling spring up in our minds, or how could any one be justified by faith, if our salvation subsisted in those things only which are subject to the senses? For which cause the Apostle who seemed to doubt of the Resurrection of Christ, till he had first assured himself both by sight and touch of the marks of His sufferings remaining on His Person, was answered by the Lord: *Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.*¹

Wherein consists the merit and excellence of faith.

2. That we, then, my most dearly beloved, might have opportunity of this blessedness, our Lord JESUS Christ, having fulfilled all things which appertained to the preaching of the Gospel and to the mysteries of the New Covenant, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, in the presence of His disciples was raised up into Heaven,² and thus put an end to His Bodily Presence, to remain henceforward at the Right Hand of His Father, until the time divinely pre-ordained for adding new children to the Church shall be accomplished, and He shall come to judge the quick and dead in the same flesh in which He ascended.

That all things are for the sake of the Elect.

What, therefore, in our Redeemer was before open to sight, has now passed into sacraments; and that our faith might be the more excellent and the more secure, to sight has succeeded authoritative teaching, which the hearts of the faithful, enlightened by rays from above, should henceforth follow.

¹ S. John xx. 29.

² S. Luke xxiv. 50; S. Mark xvi. 19.

For the Ascension.

3. This faith, increased by the Lord's Ascension, and strengthened by the Gift of the Holy Ghost, not bonds, nor prisons—not banishment, nor famine, nor fire—not the savage fangs of wild beasts, nor the punishments devised by the cruelty of persecutors,—have been able to terrify. For this faith, over the whole world, not men only, but women—not beardless boys alone, but virgins of tender age,—have contended, even to the pouring forth of their blood in its behalf. This faith has cast out devils, removed diseases, raised the dead. For which cause the Apostles themselves, who, although confirmed by so many miracles and instructed by so many discourses, had been stricken nevertheless with fear at the cruel circumstances of the Lord's Passion, and had not without much doubting received the truth of His Resurrec-

How greatly
the Apostles
were strength-
ened by the
Lord's Ascen-
sion.

tion, made so great advance from the Lord's Ascension, that all things which had formerly inspired fear, were now changed into a subject of joy.

For they had bent the whole earnestness of their thoughts on the Divine Presence of Him who sat at the Right Hand of His Father, and were no longer withholden by the interposition of bodily sight from fastening the gaze of their mind upon that which had neither been absent from His Father when He came down, nor left His disciples by His Ascension.

4. At that time, then, my most dearly beloved, the Son of Man became known as Son of God in a more excellent and sacred manner, when He betook Himself again to the glory of His Father's Majesty; and He began to be, in an unspeakable manner, more closely present in His Divine nature, who became further removed in His human. At that time began better-instructed faith to draw near in mental approach to the Son equal with the Father, and no more to need the power of handling that bodily subsistence in Christ which is less than the Father.¹ For since the nature of His glorified Body still remained, the faith of believers was directed to that place where He might be touched, not by the bodily hand, but by the spiritual apprehension, He the Only-Begotten, Equal with

¹ S. John xiv. 28.

For the Ascension.

the Father. Hence arises that saying which the Lord, after His Resurrection, addressed to Mary Magdalene (who represented the Church), when she was pressing forward to touch Him: *Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father:*¹ that is, 'I will not that thou come to Me in the body, nor that thou recognise Me by the perception of sense; I withhold thee for higher privileges, I prepare for thee greater things: when I shall have ascended to My Father, then shalt thou touch Me more perfectly and more truly, when thou shalt receive that which thou dost not touch, and believe that which thou dost not behold.' But when, as the Lord went up into Heaven, the eyes of the disciples followed and gazed on Him with intent wonder, two Angels stood near them glistening with a wonderful brightness of apparel, which also said: 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into Heaven? *This same Jesus who is taken from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into Heaven.*'² By which words all children of the Church were taught that Jesus Christ should be believed in as about to come in visible appearance in the same Body wherein He had ascended; and that it might not be doubted that all things were put under Him who had been served from the very beginning of His Birth in the flesh by the ministry of Angels. For as an Angel announced to the Blessed Virgin that Christ should be conceived by the Holy Ghost, so, when He was born of the Virgin, the voice of the heavenly Choir proclaimed Him to the shepherds. As His Resurrection from the dead was first taught by the witness of angelic Messengers, so *their* ministrations proclaimed that He should come in that very Body to judge the world; that we might conceive how great powers will be present with Him when He shall come to judge, seeing how great ministered unto Him when He came to be judged.

Why Christ
would not be
touched by
Magdalene.

In what man-
ner Angels
ministered to
Christ.

5. Let us be glad, then, most dearly beloved, with a spiritual joy; and rejoicing in God's Presence with a worthy giving of thanks, let us raise the eyes of our heart, free from worldly objects, to that high place where Christ is. Our

¹ S. John xx. 17.² Acts i. 11.

minds are called heavenwards; let not earthly desires keep them down; we are forechosen to things eternal, let not things perishable engross us; we have entered the way of Truth, let no deceiving enticements retard our progress. And may the faithful so pass through these transitory things, that they may know themselves to be but pilgrims in this valley of the world, in which even if some pleasures allure us, they must not be basely embraced, but boldly passed by! For to this earnest endeavour the most blessed Apostle Peter urges us, and according to that affection which he conceived for feeding the sheep of Christ, when he made that threefold profession of his love for the Lord,¹ says, beseeching them, *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.*² On whose side do carnal delights war, unless for the Devil, who delights in binding, by the pleasures of corruptible goods, souls which aspire to heavenly things, and in bringing them down from those mansions from which he himself fell? Against whose snares each faithful soul should watch warily, that he may destroy his enemy in that very respect wherein he is tempted.

Nothing is of greater power against the Devil than charity and loving kindness.

But nothing is more powerful, my most dearly beloved, against the deceits of the Devil, than loving kindness and the abundance of charity; by means of which every sin is either avoided or overcome.

But the height of this virtue is not attained, until that which is opposed to it is first overthrown. But what so opposed to mercy and works of love as avarice, from which, as a root, grow all evils? and unless this be destroyed in its very first springs, it needs must be that in the ground of that heart wherein the plant of this evil has thriven, the thorns and thistles of vices must rather spring up, than any fruit of real virtue. Let us, then, my most dearly beloved, resist this so deadly evil, and

Without charity there is no ornament of virtue, no ascending to Christ.

follow after charity,³ without which the ornament of no virtue can be obtained: that through this way of love, whereby Christ came down to us, we also may be able to ascend to Him, to whom, with God

the Father and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ S. John xxi. 15.

² 1 S. Peter ii. 11.

³ 1 Cor. xiii.

Select Homilies for Holy Days and Seasons

Translated from the Writings

Of the Saints.

No. XIV.

CONTAINING HOMILIES OF S. LEO THE GREAT, THOMAS À KEMPIS,
AND S. GREGORY THE GREAT;

FOR WHITSUNTIDE.

I.

Homily of S. Leo the Great.

(1st for Pentecost.)

SYNOPSIS.

1. That the Christian Pentecost answers to the Mosaic.
2. How quickly and wondrously the disciples were taught by the Holy Ghost.
3. The perfect equality of the Persons of the most Holy Trinity.
4. The heresy of the Macedonians against the Holy Ghost, who is the Fountain and Cause of every good.
5. That all things in the Church are sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and that the institution of Fasts is from Him.

THAT this day's Solemnity, my most dearly beloved, should be honoured amongst the highest Festivals, is acknowledged by the hearts of all Catholics: nor can we doubt, how special a reverence is due to a Day which the Holy Ghost has consecrated by a most signal miracle of His grace. For the same is tenth from that on which the Lord ascended above the highest Heaven, to His seat at the Right Hand of God the Father; and the fiftieth which has beamed upon us from His Resurrection in Him, from whom it had its beginning: and great are the mysteries of old and new sacraments which it contains;

For Pentecost.

by which, also, is most plainly declared both that grace was before announced by the law, and that the law was fulfilled by grace. For as, in former times, the Hebrew people, on their deliverance from Egypt, received the Law on Mount Sinai,¹ on the fiftieth day after the sacrifice of the lamb; The figure of the New Law. so after the Passion of the Lord, in which the true Lamb of God was slain, on the fiftieth day from His Resurrection, the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and the multitude of believers,² that the earnest Christian might readily acknowledge, in the origin of the Old Testament, the appointed figure of the beginning of the Gospel, and believe the same Spirit to have founded the second Covenant, who had established the first.

2. For, as the history of the Apostles testifies, *When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*³ O how swift is

The excellency of the teaching of God.

the word of wisdom, and, where God is master, how quickly is the lesson learned! No use did they make of an interpreter, that they might understand, nor needed they practice for experience, nor time for study; but the Spirit of Truth blowing where He listed,⁴ the peculiar tongues of the several nations became the common language of the Church. Therefore, from this day forth the trumpet of the Gospel message sounded aloud; from this day the showers of heavenly graces, and streams of blessings, watered every desert, and all the dry land. For *the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters* to renew the face of the earth; and for the driving away the old darkness, beams of new light shot forth, when by the splendour of the glistening tongues, the resplendent Word of the Lord and fiery eloquence was conceived; wherein was an enlightening and burning power, for the creation of understanding and consuming of sin.

¹ Exod. xix. 17.

² Acts ii. 1.

³ Acts ii. 1.

⁴ S. John iii. 8.

For Pentecost.

3. But although, my most dearly beloved, the appearance itself of the miracle was very wonderful, and we may not doubt that, in that joyous assemblage of all human tongues, the Majesty of the Holy Ghost was present; nevertheless, let none suppose that His Divine Substance manifested Itself in a shape visible to the bodily sight. For His invisible Nature, which also belongs to Him equally with the Father and with the Son, shewed, indeed, the quality of His Gift and Work by such significant token as He would; but the property of His Essence He contained within His Godhead; for even as are the Father and the Son, so is the Holy Ghost unapproachable by human sight. For in the Divine Trinity no difference is there, nor inequality; and no conception whatever concerning Its Substance can be divided in respect either of power, or glory, or eternity. And though there be one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost, yet is the Godhead One, and the Nature undivided. For as the Only-begotten Son is of the Father, so is the Holy Spirit the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, not as any creature is of the Father and of the Son, but as having Life and Power with Both, and eternally subsisting in the Nature of the Father and of the Son. Hence, when our Lord gave a promise to His disciples, before the day of His Passion, of the Coming of the Holy Ghost: *I have yet, said He, many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will shew you things to come. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.*¹ Not distinct, therefore, and separate are the things of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; but all things that the Father hath, the same hath the Son, and the same hath the Holy Ghost: nor was there ever a time when this Communion was lacking in the Blessed Trinity; for therein the having all things is the same with having eternal Existence. Into this Mystery let no thought of times, or degrees, or differences, enter; and if none

A setting forth
of the Mystery
of the Most
Holy Trinity.

¹ S. John xvi. 12.

For Pentecost.

is able to explain of God what is, let none dare to affirm what is not. For it is more excusable not to speak worthily of a Nature whose mystery is ineffable, than to define the contrary to It. Whatsoever, therefore, can be conceived by pious hearts concerning the Eternal and Incommutable Glory of the Father, let them understand this at the same time, inseparably and without difference, also of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. For therefore do we confess this Blessed Trinity to be One God, because in these Three Persons there is no difference either of Substance, or Power, or Will, or Operation.

In the Holy Trinity there is no difference.

4. As, therefore, we abhor the Arians, who would make some difference between the Father and the Son; so in like manner do we abhor the Macedonians,¹ who, although they ascribe equality to the Father and the Son, yet suppose the Holy Ghost to be of an inferior nature; not considering that they are falling into that blasphemy, which shall be forgiven neither in the present world, nor in the Judgment to come, as says our Lord: *Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*² Whosoever continues, therefore, in this wickedness is without pardon, because He has shut out Him from himself, by whom he had power to confess; nor shall he ever find the remedy of pardon, for he has no longer an Advocate to plead his cause. For from Him it is that we call upon the Father; from Him are the tears of penitents; from Him are the groans of suppliants; *and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*³ And His Equality, and Almighty Power, and One Godhead, together with the Father and the Son, the Apostle declares most plainly, where he says, *Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.*⁴

Why the sin against the Holy Ghost is unpardonable.

¹ The Macedonian heresy was condemned at the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, as the Arian had been at that of Nicæa, A.D. 325.

² S. Matt. xii. 32.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 4.

For Pentecost.

5. By these, my most dearly beloved, and other proofs innumerable, with which the Divine Oracles are radiant, let us be excited with one heart to the veneration of Pentecost, exulting in honour of the Holy Ghost, by whom the whole Catholic Church is sanctified, and every reasonable soul endued with understanding; Who is the Inspirer of faith, the Teacher of wisdom, the Fountain of love, the Seal of chastity, and the Cause of every virtue. Let the minds of the faithful rejoice, because the praises of One God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are celebrated by the confession of all tongues throughout the whole world; and because that Power, which shewed Itself under the visible emblem of fire, still continues Its work of Grace. For He, the Spirit of Truth, makes the House of His glory to shine with the brightness of His light, and will have nought continue in His Temple which is either dark or tepid. Of His gift and teaching also is it that we have received the purification of fasting and almsgiving. For this august Day is followed by the practice of a most wholesome observance, which all Saints have ever found most profitable to themselves, and to the earnest celebration of which we exhort you with pastoral solicitude: that if on the previous days heedless negligence has contracted any stain, it may be chastened by the discipline of fasting, and amended by the devotion of piety. On Wednesday, therefore, and Friday let us fast; and on the Saturday, with a view to the same end, let us keep our vigil with accustomed devotion; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

The praises
of the Holy
Ghost.

Fasts have
come of the
Holy Ghost.

II.

Homily of Thomas a Kempis.**ON THE FEAST OF PENTECOST—OF THE GIFTS OF
THE HOLY GHOST.**

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.¹

TO-DAY Holy Church celebrates the solemnity of the Holy Ghost. To-day the assembly of the faithful every where exults with devout joy. The choirs of Clerics are jubilant in hymns and psalms. The priests celebrate the blessed Sacrifice ; and all alike praise God, with highest lauds, for the coming of the Holy Ghost. For to-day it was that the Apostles openly received the Holy Ghost in the form of fiery tongues, and straightway were sweetly set on fire inwardly with love, while outwardly they preached with boldness the Word of God. To-day the Christian faith began to be published, and the number of believers in Jerusalem to be increased. To-day was great joy caused among the people, and many wonders were wrought upon the sick by the Apostles. For never since the beginning of the world was known so abundant an outpouring of the Holy Ghost. To-day did holy religion and the Apostolic life take its rise : which, from that time, became the mirror of sanctity to all the Religious ; and, again, the rule of the cœnobitic life, where none has property of his own. To-day were the holy Apostles so confirmed in the love of Christ, and enlightened by the grace of the Holy Spirit, that by no adversities could they be broken, by no prosperity enervated, by no errors seduced, by no reasonings separated from the integrity of the faith. To-day were humble and simple men made wise, and poor fishermen mighty Doctors ; and what they learned not in the schools by disputation, that received they from Heaven through devout prayer. To-day were unlettered and timid men made eloquent and stout-hearted ; and they who had knowledge *only* of one tongue, at the teaching of the Holy Ghost speak like theolo-

¹ Acts ii. 4.

For Pentecost.

gians, in the words of all tongues. To-day were earthly men made heavenly; they who had been before despised become objects of wonder to every nation under heaven; and they who were thought to have little or no knowledge, bring forward and expound testimonies, from the Law and the Prophets, concerning Christ. To-day arose the Angelic life on earth, and a new heaven appeared in the world; for the faithful learned to raise their mind from the flesh to the Spirit; from torpidity to warmth; from earth to Heaven.

2. O how great was their fervour, who were content with so little! How devout and obedient did they prove, who voluntarily submitted themselves to the Apostolic counsels! These are the works of the Holy Spirit, who gathered together the hearts of the faithful from divers nations into one Faith, raised them to heavenly things by the hope of eternal good, and suddenly enkindled in them the fire of His love. By these holy Apostles was the primitive Church founded, and widely spread throughout the world; imbued with sacred doctrines, and wondrously confirmed by many miracles. From these holy Apostles, and their followers, the holy Hermits of old primarily received the model of perfect self-renunciation, and left behind them many disciples, as an example to ourselves. Taught also by these Apostolic Saints and Hermits beloved of God, our glorious Father Augustine, that illustrious Doctor, attained to contempt of the world; who afterwards was made Presbyter and Bishop, and founded a Monastery of Clerics; and began to live in common, according to the Apostolic life, with many of God's servants, to whom also he delivered his rule in writing for their guidance. In like manner, the holy Father Benedict, a zealous imitator of the Apostolic life, published another rule of monastic discipline, full of excellence; by which, Monks living in religious vows might happily advance to the glory of eternal blessedness. Yea, and very many are the other holy men of the Religious life, who, inspired by the grace of the Holy Ghost, and desiring to imitate the counsels of evangelical perfection, established in different parts of the world orders of sacred religion. And so great grace did they obtain of God, that they shone forth with Apostolic miracles, and illumined Holy Church by their

doctrine and example. Meetly, therefore, ought all the faithful to honour this most sacred Day with singular devotion, and to invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit, that they may be made meet, by His visitation, to be imbued and comforted; fired by His love; cleansed, by His bedewing, from every stain of sin.

3. For all the Saints and Elect, from the beginning of the world, have been drawn to the worship of God, and recalled from the errors of the Gentiles, by the inspiration of this Holy Spirit; and all who have received Divine graces have singularly pleased God in humility. Even now, also, does the Holy Ghost work in His faithful many good works of charity, pleasing to Himself and profitable to others; and frequently affords, if not open miracles, yet certainly the comfort of internal devotion. He opens also to those who pray and are attentive in psalmody, the secrets of the Holy Scriptures, the truest tokens of the knowledge and love of Him. He supplies, also, against the temptations of the many forms of human frailty, the holy remedies of spiritual fortitude. He it is who Himself instructs His faithful by the sacred Oracles, rules them by Superiors, ministers the Sacraments by His Priests, lest in the pilgrimage of this life they should wander out of the right way, and faint in their toils. He moves the heart of man to compunction for his past sins, charges him with his daily negligences and smallest defects; nor suffers the guilt of any stain, however slight, to linger in the conscience of the faithful soul. He rouses to renewed fervour, to devout prayer, to studious reading, to prompt obedience, to the pursuit of humility, to the observance of devout exercises. He withdraws the soul from earthly things, invites to peace of heart, rebukes for light words, appeases anger, drives out lust, takes away envy, restrains gluttony. He persuades us to flee listlessness, and to hold fast discipline. He teaches us what to do and what to shun, both within and without. He is present with those who are in tribulation of soul; He comforts the humble, raises up the weak-hearted, listens to those who groan, pities those who weep, gives pardon to the penitent.

4. As often, therefore, as thou art in tribulation or temptation, have recourse straightway to the assistance of Heaven;

For Pentecost.

humbly invoke the grace of the Holy Spirit; lay before Him all thy care, and commit thyself entirely to His pity; that, according to His good pleasure, and for His glory, He may mercifully order all thy grievances to the more abundant profit of thy soul, and conduct all things to a happy end. For He knows all things, searches and penetrates all things, and permits nothing to happen to thee without a reason; He scourges and heals, humbles and exalts thee. For this is the special operation of the Holy Spirit in this frail body, tainted with so many miseries; that by true contrition the stains of sins may be cleansed away; that past evils may be turned to more abundant humility, and that the good which has begun may grow to greater perfection; that so no period may pass without spiritual fruit; but that every act, word, and thought, may tend continually to the honour of God, and the glory of the ever-blessed Trinity. Which things may the Holy Spirit vouchsafe to bestow upon our prayers, by His most benignant grace, who on this day filled most abundantly the hearts of the Apostles. Amen.

III.

(2d for Pentecost.)

OF THE CONSOLATION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

*I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.*¹

WHEN our Lord JESUS Christ was about to depart in the body from His disciples, He promised them, when sorrowful at the prospect of His leaving them, the spiritual consolation of the Holy Ghost, who should never depart from their hearts, but abide with them for ever. O how blessed is the promise of Christ, concerned not with the joy of the world, but with the consolation of the Holy Ghost; which is so precious and sweet that nothing in human things can be compared with it. Great, truly, was the comfort which the holy Apostles found in the Humanity of Christ, hearing openly from His mouth the Di-

¹ S. John xiv. 16.

vine oracles, and seeing with their eyes His amazing miracles. And therefore not without reason was it that they were sad at His departure, as orphans on the eve of separation from His most sweet society, fearing that they were to be left alone without needful protection amidst the wickedness and scandals of the Jews. Wherefore their most kind Master, understanding secrets and foreseeing the future, Himself comforts His beloved disciples under the sadness which was coming upon them; and, in the place of His bodily Presence, He gives them a firm assurance of spiritual and abiding comforts. For worthy, indeed, they were of heavenly consolation and of the Divine Indwelling; seeing they were true despisers of the world, and perfect imitators of the lowly life of Christ. Such as these the Father loves; for such the Son prays; such the Holy Ghost hears and enlightens.

2. See now the inestimable grace of Divine pity, how the Son of God chose the poor and simple into the fellowship of His preaching to convert the world; and decreed to bestow upon them freely, in return for the small and worthless things of the world which they had relinquished, the precious Gifts of the Holy Ghost. And why was this, but to teach us that we should despise the glory of the world, and to shew that He took singular delight in lowliness? Taught, therefore, by these Divine Oracles, flee, O Religious brother, honours and delights. Put aside the cares of the world, and prepare thy heart by devout prayer to receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost. And if already thou standest well, and hast left the ways of the world, look not back again, nor be content with thy present acquirements, but aspire more ardently after a more perfect and sacred state; and that thou mayest deserve at this time to receive new grace, be earnest in the pursuit of compunction; and shut thyself in thy cell, as in the upper-room, with the Apostles. For it is a well-grounded token of the Presence of the grace of God, if any desire earnestly the possession of higher blessings, if he grieve from his inmost heart for his daily deficiencies, if he abstain from many things which are lawful to him, if he diligently consider how he may advance and grow better, if he never esteem himself perfect in any thing, nor believe that he has performed any thing as he

For Pentecost.

ought. For it behoves thee to renounce utterly all vile things, if thou desirest to be refreshed with the consolation of the Holy Ghost, to be strengthened by His power, to be enkindled with His love.

3. But we must still inquire, by what exercises the holy Apostles attained to so great grace. For it was not by a sudden conversion, nor in one single day, that they mounted to the height of so great perfection; but it was by degrees that they advanced, continually growing in virtues, in the school of Christ, as good disciples, diligently instructed by a good Master. And, first, they left of their own accord every thing they had for Christ; they gave up their parents, and kindred, and all other earthly ties; prepared to undergo with Him toil and want, and the evil reports of men. Whence it was that He said to them before His Passion, *Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.*¹ Behold the good beginning which the Apostles made; for, stripped of earthly things, and tried by adversities, they clave with constancy to Christ. And although, at the time of His Passion, from fear of death they forsook Him for a little while, yet for this they grieved deeply; and coming to a fuller knowledge of their own weakness, they returned to Christ with greater humility and more fervent love. For after His Resurrection, they were again visited by Him, and strengthened by His words, and by the Scriptures, that thus they might advance to a greater height in faith and spiritual life. Lastly, when Christ ascended into Heaven, they transferred all their hope to heavenly things; neither did they then feel sorrow at His departure, but rather gladly gave thanks for the greatness of His glory; so that they returned with great joy to Jerusalem. There they were assembled together in a large upper room, and were intently engaged with one mind in prayer and holy meditation, and prepared themselves with humility and earnest longing for the grace of the Holy Ghost, which should be sent them from Heaven. There they tarried with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and devoutly conversed of the actions, and doctrines, and miracles of our Saviour; and, as we must piously believe,

¹ S. Luke xxii. 28.

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heard and learned from the Blessed Virgin no few mysteries of Christ.

4. There, laying aside the cares of the world, and shutting out vain conversation, they turned their whole desires to the heavenly promises of the interior life; that so, in addition to the gifts which they already possessed, they might deserve to receive in a fuller measure the Holy Ghost. And thus indeed it came to pass. For at His coming they were all filled, and gifted, and enlightened with such graces, that they were radiant with miracles, and powers, and teaching, above Patriarchs and Prophets. For whatsoever of mystic meaning was veiled in the Law and in the Prophetic sayings, they understood by the enlightening of the Holy Ghost, and were able to speak forth in various tongues. And very necessary was this for the edification of the whole Church, that they should, in the first instance, be perfectly instructed concerning all the sacraments of our Salvation, who were ordained afterwards to preach the Gospel of Christ to every creature throughout the whole world. Therefore did the Heavenly Father give His good Spirit to them who sought Him, and enriched the breasts of the Apostles with so copious a benediction, that they no longer coveted any thing earthly, nor feared any adversities of the world, but rejoiced to suffer disgrace for the Name of JESUS. He also bestowed upon them, with the fulness of knowledge, the armour of spiritual warfare, that they might be possessed of divine wisdom against the errors of the Gentiles, and in order to vanquish the eloquence of philosophers, and to hold fast with courage the palm of patience against the cruelty of persecutors. Great, truly, was the grace which shone forth in the Apostles, whereby men so inexperienced according to the world, grew up in so short a time to so great a height of holiness, that their preaching reached, by the co-operating grace of the Holy Ghost, even to the ends of the world.

5. In consequence, consider from what has been said, that the Holy Apostles, who were most illustrious in Christ, received not this spiritual consolation without labour and due preparation; nor lived in this world without a contest and affliction of the body; but so much greater was their zeal for

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Christ, and their neighbour's salvation, as they knew they had received more abundant gifts above all other men. In these things they sought not their own glory, nor a transitory reward, nor the praise of men; but purely the honour of God, and heavenly glory, to be entered upon after the labour of this life. For truly in all their conversation amongst the various Gentiles, they anxiously strove to guard, with humility and gentleness of heart, the grace which they received from Heaven; and they neither remained slothful in idleness, nor sought the conveniences of the flesh; but counting the value of souls, they edified their disciples by word and example, and offered most abundant fruit to God. Very profitable, therefore, is it for all religious and devout brethren who have proposed to themselves to take up their cross for Christ, and to follow the Apostolic life, earnestly to ponder their acts and words; that so they may always ardently aspire after an advance to a more perfect state; and by perseverance in the discipline of their order, assisted by the grace of the Holy Ghost, may with all Saints lay hold upon eternal life. Amen.

IV.

*(3d for Pentecost.)*OF THE HOLY CONVERSATION AND ONENESS OF HEART OF THE
PRIMITIVE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul in God.¹

HOW holy and pleasant was that assembly of the primitive Church, gathered together by the Holy Ghost; and which nought could disturb, so long as the unity of the Faith was kept inviolate in the bond of charity! To the perfect maintenance of this, of singular assistance is the surrender of all private right in temporal things, conformity in good conduct, prompt obedience in inferiors, exemplary life in supe-

¹ Vid. Act. iv. 32.

riors, affectionate condescension to the weak, strict correction of excesses, due regulation of particular duties; and, that the community may suffer no loss or injury, all ought, according to their power, to promote the common good: that charity may shine forth in all by holy works, and God be thereby pre-eminently glorified. All these good things are found to have been primarily observed by the Holy Apostles, and afterwards to have descended from them to the other faithful; but principally to have been delivered for imitation to the Religious Superiors of the Church. For so long as the Apostolic life shone forth in the head and members, they were possessed of every good themselves, and great grace was in all. And because they sought God, and despised earthly things, temporal goods were added to them, together with spiritual gifts. And of so much greater honour were they esteemed worthy, in proportion as they thought more humbly of themselves, and disesteemed all worldly glory. Well and moderately did they use the goods which they received; nor did they behave proudly under the dignities and blessings which were conferred upon them; but ruled those who were placed under them with paternal anxiety and with strict discipline. Moreover, many were the poor and weak whom they compassionated, and most willingly succoured; they restrained themselves and others from idle conversation, knowing that for every idle word which men shall have spoken, they shall each render an account in the Judgment.

2. But when some had begun to wax cold in faith, and to turn aside with greater freedom to the conveniences of the flesh, to seek their own, to covet honours; straightway, alas! arose murmurs and scandals, and then appeared the tares of dissensions, wickedly sown by the enemy, to destroy the grain of the good seed in the Lord's field. But this pestilent disease, and beginning of complaint, was met by the Holy Apostles with most wholesome counsel; and they chose faithful ministers, to provide the holy multitude with necessary victuals. But they were themselves instant in prayer and preaching, as they were instructed by the Holy Ghost, preferring spiritual things to temporal; and against the questions which were moved, and the cases which arose, they brought forward the

For Pentecost.

testimonies of the Law and the Prophets. But the Holy Ghost added His gifts still more abundantly, that they might impart them to the new converts. For He filled some of the believers with the Spirit of Prophecy, for the consolation of the primitive Church. Some He appointed Doctors, for the instruction of the ignorant. Many were the priests also, and masters of the Law, whom He converted to the truth of the Gospel. He wrought also many signs and wonders amongst distant nations, for the propagation of the Catholic Faith. This was seen by the most cruel enemy, the Devil, and roused his envy. He was stung with grief, and moved the kings and princes of the earth to rage furiously with their arms, and every where persecute the faithful. And because it was at Jerusalem that grace flourished most abundantly, and Apostolic fervour rose to the greatest height; there it was that Satan raged with greatest fury, and strove to kill, by the scourge of persecution, the first growth of the infant Church, and to scatter it from its home among foreign nations. Howbeit this malice of the Devil, and the temporal persecution of the faithful, was converted by God to the salvation of many, and the more glorious manifestation of His holy Name. And thus the temporal tribulation of the just was made a wholesome purifying of vices; and that which the wily tempter had prepared for their ruin, the pitiful Saviour ordered for a crown to those who patiently endured. For had there not been so grievous a persecution in the world, there had not been so many Martyrs crowned in Heaven. For many of the faithful decreed rather to shed their blood than to deny the Faith; and more gladly to undergo death than to start backward from the love of Christ.

3. Far, far from us be the thought, that Satan with his adversaries should be more powerful to injure than Christ with His holy Angels to defend. Truly the malignant Spirit could have done nothing against the devout, had not God in His justice permitted him; for He knew the actions and the strength of each, and by such afflicting occasions as these He translated His Elect to eternal glory, and drowned their adversaries with cruel condemnation in everlasting fire. Thus the good and evil deserve to receive, as is just, according to

their merits; for the justice of God sends away no good man unrewarded, nor bad man unpunished.

4. Nor ought it to offend weak minds, that there appeared so soon within Holy Church tares and murmurings; for ever with the good are the bad intermingled; and with the perfect walk the wicked and imperfect. For the greater the holiness, the smaller is the number, as is seen in divers religious orders. For greater appears to be the number of beginners than of the perfect; and fewer those of the contemplative than of the active life. Also, amongst many inferiors, few are found profitable for the discharge of offices; and for the good government of themselves and others, far fewer still. Herein is seen the frailty of man, and our pride is taught humility: so prone are we to vices, and so slow to pursue perfection! However, none can rightly find fault with another, for being defective and foolish; for as another is frail, so too art thou. A rare sight on earth is true perfection; and every where are found broken vessels. Therefore ought every one to keep an eye upon himself, and to pity his erring neighbour, nor to be angry with him, should he at times offend. Whence Blessed James says, *In many things we offend all.*¹ We must have recourse, therefore, to confession of humility, that what is wanting in the deficiency of our holiness may be supplied by the confession of our frailty. And so much deeper in all things should be our humility, as we are the further removed from true perfection. In sinning and falling we are brethren; none is secure of his own perseverance. As long, therefore, as we live here, we ought to bear with the weak, and also must have some adversaries. For Christ bore a long time with the imperfections of His disciples, and often heard the calumnies of the Pharisees. He also was perfect in all things. For God knows how to dispose the adversities of this world for the accomplishment of many good purposes, which are seldom wanting to the good and true of heart. For by such thorny ways and violent storms the mind is kept back from earthly delights. The heart is roused to the love of heavenly things, and the man is exercised by patience. He learns to suffer with the afflicted, he is humbled in sorrows, he is conformed

¹ S. James iii. 2.

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to the sufferings of Christ. His compunction is increased, his distraction lessened. He prays more fervently, he sighs more frequently. He is weary of life, he desires to be dissolved and to be with Christ, because in the world there is no peace. But the pitiful Lord, who knows what is profitable for us, often defers the fulfilment of His servants' desires, with a view to something better: that so they may be more clearly purified for the obtaining the promised joys in Heaven. He hears their cry, He sees their affliction and trouble; but He does not immediately remove from them their pain, that their deserts may be increased by their endurance of evils. He pities them truly, and hears them, for the securing of their salvation, but not for the accomplishment of their own will. And because He decrees to give them a kingdom of eternal blessedness, various are the cups of bitterness which He mingles with their life, that they may not place their hope in earthly things, nor rest their affection in their place of banishment, instead of their country of heavenly delight.

5. For very greatly do temporal miseries, endured with patience, avail towards the washing away of sins, and regaining the favour of Divine mercy; towards the diminution of purifying punishment, the acquisition of greater grace, the augmentation of future glory. What man is there so pure, so guarded, and perfect in all his conversation, from morning till evening, as not to offend sometimes by thought, word, or deed, knowingly or ignorantly? Who of so good a conscience, that he has nothing to confess? Who of such singular purity and abstinence, that he fears not to be convicted of some fault in the future Judgment? For all things will be examined with the greatest strictness, in the Presence of God, a most upright Judge; even those things which are now but little or not at all esteemed. Whilst there is time, therefore, and room for mercy, let us all repent together, and fervently amend ourselves. God is kind; He will willingly pardon our faults, if we truly acknowledge and grieve for them. And because we are brethren in Christ, let us pray one for another, as brotherly love demands. Let us wait one upon another, let us support one another, let us admonish one another, let us console one another, rejoice one with another, sorrow one

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with another. Let us love one another, even as Christ loved us, and gave Himself up for us, who has also borne with us a long time in our past evils, and yet to-day bears with our imperfections in hope of our amendment; that we may learn to suffer with our neighbours, and may pray for them. If we attend to these things and do them, we shall fulfil the law of Christ; and be His true disciples and well-beloved friends,—beloved of the Father, adopted of the Son, enkindled by the love of the Holy Ghost, predestinated and blessed by All the Holy Trinity. Then also will be able to be said, and truly witnessed of us, what we read in the Acts of the Apostles concerning the primitive Church, that *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul in God; and they had all things common.*¹ Amen.

V.

Homily of S. Gregory the Great.

[S. Gregory, surnamed the Great, was born at Rome A.D. 540; chosen Pope A.D. 590; died A.D. 604, on the 12th of March, the day on which his memory is honoured in the Church.]

ADDRESSED TO THE PEOPLE IN THE BASILIC OF S. PETER THE APOSTLE, ON THE HOLY DAY OF PENTECOST.

JESUS answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I

¹ Vid. Acts iv. 32.

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said, *I go unto the Father : for My Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you : for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do.*¹

IT seems good to us, my most dear brethren, only briefly to touch upon the words of the Gospel Lesson, that afterwards we may the longer dwell upon the thoughts of this high Solemnity. To-day, with a sudden sound, did the Holy Spirit come upon the disciples, and change their earthly minds into the love of Him ; and with the outward appearance of fiery tongues, their hearts within them were set on fire. For by receiving God under the semblance of fire, they were sweetly enkindled with love. For the Holy Spirit Himself is Love ; wherefore John also says, *God is love.*² He who longs for God with his whole heart, already hath Him whom he loves. For none could love God, unless he possessed Him whom he loves. So now, if any of you be asked whether he loves God, with entire confidence, and undoubtedly, he answers, I do. But in the very outset of the Lesson, ye have heard what the Truth says, *If a man love Me, he will keep My words.* So that the proof of love consists in the shewing forth of works. Wherefore the same John says in his Epistle, *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.*³ We truly love God, if, in obedience to His commandments, we restrain ourselves from the pleasures to which we are inclined. For he who is still dissolved in unlawful desires, loves not God, because in his will he opposes Him.

The effects
and tokens of
Divine love in
in our minds.

2. *And My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.* Consider, my most dear brethren, how high and august an honour it is, to have God come and dwell in our hearts. Surely if any rich and powerful friend were to come into your

How high an
honour it is to
have God in-
dwelling in us.

¹ S. John xiv. 23-31.

² 1 S. John iv. 8 and 16.

³ 1 S. John iv. 20.

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house, you would with all speed purify it thoroughly, lest haply there might be somewhat to offend his eyes upon his entrance. Let him, therefore, who prepares the house of his soul for God, wash away the filth of evil works. But see what the Truth says, *We will come and make Our abode with*

Into some
hearts He
comes, but
abides not.

him. For into some hearts He comes, and abides not; for though, by their sorrow for sin, they obtain the regard of God, yet in the time of tempta-

tion they forget what it was that caused their sorrow, and so return and commit sin, as if they had never bewailed it. But whoso truly loves God, and keeps His commandments, into his heart the Lord comes, and makes His abode there; for he is so deeply penetrated with the love of God, that he falls not away from it in the time of temptation. He truly loves, whose mind is not conquered, with his consent, by wicked pleasure. For so far is any one removed from heavenly love, as he takes pleasure in earthly things. And, therefore, it is further added, *He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My sayings.* Return, then, my most dear brethern, inwardly into yourselves; search out whether you truly love God; nor yet let any believe

To know
whether we
love God, our
life must be
questioned.

himself, whatever answer his mind return him, unless it be attested by works. Let our tongue, our soul, our life be asked, whether we love our Maker.

Love is never
idle.

The love of God is never idle. Wherever it is, it does great works; if it refuse to work, it is no love.

And the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. You know, most dear brethren, that He who speaks, even the Only-begotten Son, is the Word of the Father; and therefore it is that the Word, which the Son speaks, is not the Son's, but the Father's, because the Son Himself is the Word of the Father. *These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.* When was He to be otherwise than present with them, who, before His Ascension into Heaven, gave that promise, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world?*¹ But the Incarnate Word is at the same time present and at a distance; at a distance in the body, present in His Divine Nature. He says, therefore, that he had been at that time present with them;

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 20.

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because, having been always present by His invisible power, He was now departing from their bodily sight.

3. *But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* Most of you know, my brethren, that Paraclete, in the Greek language, is the same with Advocate or Comforter in the Latin. And for this reason the Holy Ghost is called an Advocate, because He pleads with the Justice of the Father in behalf of the faults of sinners. And He, who is of One Substance with the Father and the Son, is said to pray earnestly for sinners; because those whom He has filled with His Presence He moves to earnest prayer. And therefore Paul says: *The Spirit Itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.*¹ But he who makes intercession is inferior to him of whom intercession is made; how, then, is the Spirit said to intercede, seeing He is not inferior? The Spirit Himself truly intercedes, because those whom He fills He enkindles to make intercession. But the same Spirit is called Comforter; because He provides hope of pardon for those who are mourning for the commission of sin, and raises their mind from the affliction of sorrow. And of Him, truly, is it promised: *He shall teach you all things.* For, unless the same Spirit be present in the heart of the hearer, to no purpose is the word of the

In what
sense the
Spirit in-
tercedes
for us.

How He
teaches us
within.

teacher. Let none, therefore, attribute to the teaching of man what he learns from the teacher's mouth: for unless He be within to teach, the teacher's tongue labours to no purpose without. Behold, you hear all alike the words of the speaker, and yet how different a meaning do you gain from the words you hear! Now, since the voice is the same, why does it reach your hearts with so various a meaning, unless it be that you have a Master within you, who, through the warning which the speaker's voice addresses to you all in common, teaches some among you in a special manner the meaning of what you hear? Of this Unction of the Spirit, John speaks: *The same Anointing teacheth you of all things.*² No instruction is con-

¹ Rom. viii. 26.

² 1 S. John ii. 27.

veyed by the voice, where the mind is not anointed by the Spirit. But why say we this of the teaching of men, when even the Creator Himself speaks not to the instruction of man, unless He speak by the Unction of the Spirit? Cain, verily, before he committed the sin of killing his brother, heard the words: *Thou hast sinned, be at rest.*¹ But because, in consequence of his sins, he was warned by the Voice, without the Unction of the Spirit, he could hear indeed the words of God, but he spurned to keep them. We must farther inquire, why

And brings
all things to
our remem-
brance.

it is said of the same Spirit: *He shall bring all things to your remembrance*, since this is usually the office of an inferior? We sometimes use the expression in the sense of ‘supplying:’ and thus it is that the Invisible Spirit is said to bring things to our remembrance, because He brings us knowledge not as from the bottom, but as from some secret source. *Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you.* Here I leave it with you; there I give it to you. I leave it to those who follow Me; I give it to those who find Me.

4. Thus far, most dear brethren, we have shortly considered the words of the sacred Lesson: now let us turn our thoughts to the contemplation of this high Festival. And since, together with the Gospel, you have heard recited a Lesson from the Acts of the Apostles,² let us draw somewhat from that in aid of our contemplation. You have heard how the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon the disciples in the form of fiery tongues, and gave them the knowledge of all tongues. What did He design to shew by this miracle, but that Holy Church should be filled by the same Spirit, and speak with the voice of all nations? Now they, who strove to build the tower against the face of God, forfeited the communion of one language;³ but in those who humbly feared God, all languages were united. Thus did humility earn the reward of power, and pride meet with the recompense of confusion.

5. But we must inquire, why it was that the Holy Ghost, co-eternal with the Father and the Son, appeared in the form of fire; why at the same time in that of fire and of tongues; why He shews Himself sometimes in the semblance of a dove,

¹ Vid. Gen. iv. 7, according to the Septuagint.

² Acts ii.

³ Gen. xi. 8.

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sometimes in that of fire; why He came down visibly upon the Only-begotten Son in the likeness of a dove, and upon the disciples in that of fire; so as neither to come down upon the Lord in fire, nor upon the disciples as a dove. Let us return, then, and explain in order these four points which we have proposed. Now the Spirit, co-eternal with the Father and the Son, is manifested in the likeness of fire, because He is incorporeal; God is an ineffable and invisible Fire, as Paul witnesses; *Our God is a consuming fire.*¹ God is called a fire, because by Him the rust of our sins is burned away. It is of this fire that the Truth says, *I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?*² For by earth is meant earthly hearts, which are ever heaping up within themselves vile thoughts, and are trodden down by wicked spirits. But the Lord sends fire on the earth, when by the breath of the Holy Spirit He enkindles the hearts of the earthly. And the earth is set on fire, when the earthly heart is chilled in its wicked pleasures, and, quitting the lusts of the present world, is kindled with the love of God. Meetly, therefore, did the Holy Ghost appear in likeness of fire; for from every heart which He fills He shakes off benumbing cold, and sets it on fire with the burning desire of His Eternal Presence. And He shewed Himself in the likeness of fiery tongues, because He is the Spirit co-eternal with the Son; and the Tongue is most closely allied with the Word. The Son is the Word of the Father; and because the Spirit is One Substance with the Word, it was meet that the same Spirit should be manifested in the likeness of a Tongue. Or, the Spirit appeared in likeness of tongues, because every word proceeds through the tongue, and whoever is touched by the Holy Spirit, confesses the Word of God, that is, the Only-begotten Son; and can never deny the Word of God, because he has the Tongue of the Holy Spirit. Or, the Spirit appeared in fiery tongues, because all whom He has filled, He enkindles and renders eloquent. The tongues of Doctors are tongues of fire; for whilst they set forth God, the Object of love, they enkindle the hearts of their hearers. For to no purpose is the sermon of the teacher, if it cannot supply

As the Son is
the Word, so is
the Holy Ghost
the Tongue.

¹ Heb. xii. 29.² S. Luke xii. 49.

For Pentecost.

the fire of love. This fire, which is enkindled by teaching, had they caught from the very Mouth of Truth, who said, *Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?*¹ At the hearing of the word, the soul is enkindled, the cold of torpor gives way, the mind is stirred with an anxious longing after heavenly things, and grows estranged from earthly lusts. That true love, with which it is filled, torments it with sorrow; but even whilst it is tormented with this burning fire, its very torments are its food. It delights to hear heavenly precepts; and as many commandments as instruct it, serve as so many torches to enkindle it; and having been benumbed before by lusts, it is now set on fire by words. Truly, therefore, does Moses say, *From His Right Hand went a fiery law.*² For the left hand are the reprobate, and they will find their place at the left hand; but the Elect are called the Right Hand of God. And therefore, *from His Right Hand went a fiery law*; for the Elect are far from hearing the commands of Heaven with a cold heart, but are enkindled at them with the fire of love, even to their inmost soul. As soon as the word meets their ear, their heart glows with anger against itself, and is burnt up with the flame of inward delight. But the Holy Spirit was manifested in the likeness of a dove, and of fire, because He makes all whom He has filled simple and full of fire; simple in purity, and full of the fire of zeal. For simplicity cannot please God without zeal, nor zeal without simplicity. Hence the Truth Itself says, *Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.*³

Where we must observe, that our Lord would not warn His disciples by the example of the dove without the serpent, nor of the serpent without the dove; that so the cunning of the serpent might inflame the simplicity of the dove, and the simplicity of the dove temper the cunning of the serpent. Hence Paul says, *Be not children in understanding.*⁴ Lo, here we are told of the wisdom of the serpent; next let us receive a lesson from the harmlessness of the dove; *Howbeit in malice be ye children.* Hence it is said of blessed Job, *He*

¹ S. Luke xxiv. 32.³ S. Matt. x. 16.² Deut. xxxiii. 2.⁴ 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

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*was simple and upright.*¹ For how can there be uprightness without simplicity, or simplicity without uprightness? Because, then, both uprightness and simplicity are the teaching of the Holy Spirit, it was meet that He should be manifested both in likeness of fire and of a dove; that so every heart which is touched by His grace may be calmed by the mildness of gentleness, and inflamed with the zeal of righteousness.

6. But, lastly, we must inquire, why it was that He appeared upon our Redeemer Himself, the Mediator between God and men, as a dove, but upon His disciples as fire? Verily, the Only-begotten Son of God is the Judge of mankind. Who, then, could endure His justice, if before gathering us to Him in gentleness, He had determined to examine our faults in righteous zeal? Therefore was He made Man for the sake of men, and shewed Himself mild towards them. He would not smite sinners, but gather them to Him. He would first correct them in gentleness, that He might have some afterwards to save in Judgment. It was meet, therefore, that the Spirit should appear in likeness of a dove upon Him, seeing that He came not as yet to smite sin in zeal, but to bear with it in gentleness. But upon the disciples it was meet that the Holy Spirit should be manifested in fire, that these, who were simply men, and therefore sinners, should burn with spiritual warmth against themselves, and punish voluntarily within themselves by penance those sins which God in His gentleness spared. For it was not possible that even they who clave so closely to their Heavenly Master should be free from sin, as John attests, where he

Why the Holy Spirit sat in form of a dove upon Christ, and of fire upon the Apostles.

The Apostles themselves could not be free from sin.

says, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*² He came, then, in fire upon men, but appeared as a dove upon the Lord; because we ought with righteous zeal heedfully to look to those sins which the Lord in pity and gentleness bears with in us, and ever to burn them away with the ardour of penance. Therefore was the Spirit manifested in likeness of a dove upon the Redeemer; but in likeness of fire upon men, because in proportion as the severity of our Judge is tempered towards us, so much the more strongly

¹ Vid. Job. i. 1. simplex et rectus. Vulg.

² 1 S. John i. 8.

should our infirmity be kindled with indignation against itself. Having thus, then, given a full account of our four propositions, let us pass on to consider the gifts of the same Spirit.

An enumeration
of the
gifts of the
Holy Spirit.

7. Of this Spirit it is written, *By His Spirit He hath garnished the Heavens.*¹ For the garniture of the Heavens are the virtues of preachers.

And this garniture is set forth by Paul, where he says, *For to one is given, by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, divers kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that One and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.*² As many, therefore, as are the graces of preachers, so manifold is the garniture of the Heavens. And therefore it is again written, *By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made.*³ For the Word of the Lord

They were
especially
shared by the
Apostles.

is the Son of the Father. But that it might be made manifest that All the Holy Trinity together had wrought these Heavens, that is, the Holy Apostles, it is straightway added, of the Godhead of the Holy

Spirit, *And all the power of them by the Spirit of His Mouth.*⁴ The power, then, of the Heavens is derived from the Spirit; for they would not have dared to set themselves against the princes of this world, had they not been firmly knit together in the strength of the Holy Spirit. For we know what was the conduct of the Doctors of Holy Church before this Spirit came down, and we see with what courage they were endued after He had come.

The wondrous
courage of
Peter, once so
weak and
fearful.

8. What great weakness and fear, before the Spirit had come, was shewn by the Chief Pastor of the Church himself, near whose most sacred body is our seat, let the maid who kept the door tell us. For he was panic-struck by the single voice of a woman, and in his dread of death denied the Life.⁵ Peter denied on the earth, whilst the thief confessed upon the Cross.⁶

¹ Job xxvi. 13.

² 1 Cor. xii. 8-11.

³ Ps. xxxiii. 6.

⁴ Vid. Vulg. ad loc.

⁵ S. John xviii. 17.

⁶ S. Luke xxiii. 42.

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But this Apostle, now so full of fear, let us hear how he behaves after the descent of the Spirit. A council of the magistrates and elders is summoned, and the Apostles are beaten, and commanded not to speak in the name of JESUS: Peter answers, with great authority, *We ought to obey God rather than men.*¹ And again: *Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*² And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.³

The same who was first terrified at words, afterwards fears not blows.

Lo, Peter rejoices in stripes, who before was afraid of words. The same who, at first, had been terrified when questioned by the voice of a maid, now that the Holy Spirit had come, subdues, though scourged, the strength of princes. It were a pleasant task to lift up the eyes of faith towards the Power of this Artificer, and to consider, as they are scattered here and there, the Fathers of the Old and New Testament. Lo, I open the eyes of faith, and behold David, Amos, Daniel, Peter, Paul, Matthew, and would fain consider how wondrous an Artificer is the Holy Spirit; but thought fails me in the attempt. He fills the youthful harper, and makes a Psalmist.⁴ He fills a herdman, a gatherer of sycomore fruit, and makes a Prophet.⁵ He fills a youth disciplined in fasting, and makes him a judge of the aged.⁶ He fills a fisherman, and makes a Preacher.⁷ He fills a persecutor, and makes him Doctor of the Gentiles.⁸ He fills a publican, and makes an Evangelist.⁹ O how wondrous an Artificer is the Spirit! Without time consumed in learning, all that He wills is straightway done. As soon as He has touched the mind, He teaches it; with a touch the work is accomplished. He enlightens the mind of man, and straightway changes it; what was there before, is renounced; what was not there, is manifested.

How skilful an Artificer is the Holy Spirit.

9. Let us consider what this day found our holy Preachers, and what it made them. Certainly they who kept themselves retired in one assembly

His astonishing works in the Apostles.

¹ Acts v. 29.² Ibid. iv. 19, 20.³ Ibid. v. 41.⁴ 1 Sam. xvi. 18.⁵ Amos vii. 14.⁶ Hist. of Susanna v. 45.⁷ S. Matt. iv. 19.⁸ Acts ix. 1, &c.⁹ Luke v. 27.

for fear of the Jews, were acquainted each with his native tongue, and yet not even in that did they dare openly to speak of Christ. The Spirit came, and instructing their mouths with the gift of divers tongues, endued their souls with the strength of command.¹ They began to proclaim Christ even in a strange language, who had before feared to speak of Him even in their own. For their heart was set on fire, and despised the torments of the body, which it had before dreaded; and conquered the power of earthly fear by the love of the Creator. The same who had before yielded to their enemies from terror, now ruled them by authority. He, then, who raised them to so lofty a height, how else shall I describe His

A comparison
of the Incar-
nation and of
the Sending
of the Holy
Ghost.

work than by saying that He made Heaven of the minds of earthly men? Consider, most dear brethren, what rank is held after the Incarnation of the Only-begotten Son of God, by this Day's Solemnity of the Coming of the Holy Ghost. Both alike, indeed, are worthy of all honour. In the one, God abiding in Himself took human nature into the Godhead; in the other, men received into themselves God, who descended upon them from above. In the one, God was made Man, in the truth of man's nature; in the other, men were made, by adoption, gods. If we would not, then, continue earthly and in death, let us love, my most dear brethren, this Life-giving Spirit.

Since we cannot
contem-
plate God in
Himself, let us
regard Him in
His Apostles
and other
Saints.

But because the flesh cannot know the Spirit, some one, perchance, with earthly thought, may say within himself, How can I love whom I do not know? This we too allow; for the mind which is bent upon the things that are seen, cannot see Him who is unseen. For it thinks only of the things which are seen, and even when not actually engaged in them, draws their images within itself; and whilst it is grovelling amongst bodily images, it cannot rise to things spiritual. Therefore it is that it loses the knowledge of the Creator in proportion as it bears about the bodily creature more familiarly in its thoughts. But though we cannot see God, we have something which we may do, and so advance upon a road by which the eye of our intelligence may reach Him. Though we can in no wise see Him

¹ Acts ii. 2.

For Pentecost.

in Himself, we can see Him even now in His servants. For when we see them performing wondrous achievements, we are assured that God dwells in their souls. To draw an illustration upon a spiritual subject from things material: none of us can look upon the sun, when rising in its brightness, by gazing upon its orb, for the sight is strained and beaten back by its rays; but we behold the mountains brightened with the sun's light, and we see that the sun is risen. Since, then, we cannot see the Sun of Righteousness in Himself, let us look upon the mountains brightened by His radiance; I mean, His holy Apostles, who shine forth with virtues, and beam with miracles; for they are bathed in the light of the Risen Sun, who, being in Himself invisible, has shewn Himself to our sight by the mountains which He has brightened with His rays. For the Power of the Godhead in Himself is as the sun in the heavens; the Power of the Godhead in men, as the sun on earth. Let us fix our eyes, then, upon the Sun of Righteousness on earth, since we cannot see Him in Heaven; that whilst we walk without stumbling by His light on earth, we may at times lift up our eyes to Heaven to gain a sight of Him. And we shall journey on the earth without stumbling, if we love God and our neighbour with our whole heart. For we cannot love God truly without our neighbour, nor our neighbour truly without God. Therefore is it, as we have already remarked in another sermon, that we read that the same Spirit was given on two occasions to the disciples—first, by the Lord whilst dwelling on the earth; afterwards, when reigning in Heaven. He is given on earth, that we may love our neighbour; from Heaven, that we may love God. But why first on earth, afterwards from Heaven, except that we might plainly understand, according to the words of John, *He that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?*¹ Let us love our neighbour, therefore, my brethren; let us love him who is next to us, that we may arrive at the love of Him who is above us. Let the mind consider in our neighbour, what it may shew towards God; that it may deserve to rejoice perfectly in God with our neighbour. Then shall we arrive at

The Saints are brightened by Christ, as the mountains are by the sun.

¹ 1 S. John iv. 20.

that joy of the heavenly multitude, an earnest of which we have now received in the Holy Spirit. To that end let us press forward with our whole love, for in it we shall rejoice without end. There is the holy fellowship of the heavenly citizens; there secure festivity; there untroubled rest; there true peace, no longer left with us, but given to us, through our Lord JESUS Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, God for ever and ever. Amen.

I N D E X.

The following is by no means intended as a complete Index, but to facilitate reference to some specimens of the Teaching contained in the foregoing Homilies.

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THE END.

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